

A ROMANCE BY GRIZZLY ADAMS' NEPHEW, CAPTAIN "BRUIN" ADAMS!

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OLD GRIZZLY AND HIS PETS; or, The Wild Huntress of the Hills.

BY CAPTAIN "BRUIN" ADAMS.



"JES' LOOK AT MY ROSEBUD! DURN MY OLE MOCCASINS EF HE AIN'T GOT MORE SENSE NOR A MULE."

A Romance by Grizzly Adams's Nephew, Capt.
"Bruin" Adams.

Old Grizzly and His Pets;

OR,

The Wild Huntress of the Hills.

BY CAPT. "BRUIN" ADAMS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SACRIFICE.

"HARK, lad! thar they go ag'in!" exclaimed Old Grizzly, slightly leaning forward in an attitude of intense listening. "I tell you them Blackfeet ar' in one uv the'r cantankerous tantrums 'bout somethin', an' I should jedge from the'r yells thet somebody war 'bout seein' sights. They've got a prisoner, an', what's more, they're powerful glad on it."

The companion of the old hunter, and to whom this remark was addressed, was a young man of some eighteen or nineteen years of age, of remarkably fine physical development, which was shown to great advantage by his closely-fitting suit of buckskin, and upon whose handsome face there rested a look of eager anticipation.

The two were standing just within a line of bushes that fringed a slight eminence, with their faces turned down the valley from whence came the yells that had attracted their attention.

These sounds had continued for some time, momentarily increasing, not only in volume, but in fierceness, until, at the moment when Old Grizzly had spoken, the very air was trembling with their volume.

To the ears of the experienced hunter their meaning was perfectly plain; hence his assertion that they were yells of rejoicing over the capture of a prisoner.

"The'r village is close by," he continued, "an' I'll bet my old moccasins ag'in' a piece of parch that the whole tribe ar' out an' at it."

"A prisoner!" ejaculated the young hunter. "And perhaps they are torturing him at this moment! Come, let us forward; we may rescue the poor wretch!"

And without waiting to see the effect of his remarks, the impetuous youth started forward, carrying his rifle at a trail.

For a moment Old Grizzly stood as if struck dumb, but quickly recovering, he sprung forward, and laying his brawny hand on his young companion's shoulder, suddenly brought him to a standstill.

"Ar' ye mad, boy, thet ye would run y'ur head into thet nest uv rattlers?" he asked, somewhat sternly. "I tell ye thet the whole tribe ar' out, an' what's wuss, the'r blood's up. Do ye think thet two men kin face a hundred uv the imps an' not lose the'r ha'r? Why, I'm ashamed on ye. Whar's the good uv all my trainin' ef y'ur to lose y'ur head this a-way?"

It was rarely that the old hunter gave way to such evidences of temper, especially toward his young companion who was the very apple of his eye.

Old Grizzly Adams, the bear-tamer, so well known in after years, in connection with his pet, Sampson, had made the acquaintance of Alfred Badger some two or three years previous, and formed for him the strongest friendship. This had grown with the growth of the boy, so that in the intervening time he had learned to look upon him as his own son, had kept him constantly by his side, learned him the proper use of weapons, and instructed him in the arts and wiles of border warfare.

Upon the part of the young man this affection was strongly reciprocated, and he had come to regard the word or command of his friend as law in all matters appertaining to their wild life.

With a light laugh, though his clear gray eyes still flashed with the excitement of the moment, Alfred turned and faced the irate bear-tamer.

"I haven't forgot the training, uncle Grizzly," he said, using the familiar title by which he always addressed the other. "But, surely, we will not remain idly here and suffer some fellow-being to perish at the hands of these fiends?"

"How'r ye goin' to purvent it?" was the cool response of the bear-tamer.

"There *must* be a way," returned the youth, with fresh excitement, as the yells came pealing up the valley with renewed fierceness. "There *must* be a way, and I know that you

can find it out. You never fail when you attempt such things."

"Now y'u'r talkin' reasonable. Sich things can't be did in a scurry, even if it can be did at all. We must think a bit, fur, as I said before, this here runnin' into a whole village uv Blackfeet, an' them in their tantrums, ain't no child's play, nohow."

For several minutes Old Grizzly stood leaning upon his long rifle, looking intently down into the bore as if to consult some spirit that lay concealed there. Presently he drew his stalwart figure up with a jerk, threw the heavy piece into the hollow of his left arm, and uttering the single word "Come," stepped cautiously out of the fringe of bushes and began the descent into the valley below.

Knowing how useless it would be to question, the young hunter followed closely behind, imitating his leader's example and dodging from cover to cover.

The din had greatly increased as they drew forward, and now they could distinguish the shrill screeches of squaws and the still keener treble of children's voices. The very curs of the town seemed to have caught the infection, and to the pandemonium of sound was added their yelps and savage barking.

"Dang my old moccasins ef et don't beat ennything as ever I heard afore," whispered Old Grizzly, who had thrown his rifle forward and pulled back the hammer. "I tell you, Alph, my lad, they've struck a big lead, an' the whole tribe ar' rejoicing over it. We'll see in a minit. Make fur thet big red-oak yander, an' step lighter nor a panther ef ye vally y'ur ha'r."

Together the two crept forward, closely hugging the earth, and a moment later were safely ensconced behind the huge trunk, looking out upon the open, and beheld a scene of the most startling character.

The clearing before them was a rod or two in width, and was of the character of a gorge or valley. In the center of this, securely fastened to a post, with the wood piled about him ready for ignition, stood a white man, while full, a hundred Blackfeet—warriors, squaws and children—were brandishing tomahawks, knives and guns, and engaging in the most furious and grotesque dance about their victim. It was from them that came those frightful whoops and screeches.

As the white man stood, his face was only partially visible; but the glimpses obtained showed that he viewed his fate with the stoicism of an Indian himself. His dress was that of a hunter, and he seemed perfectly quiescent, waiting for the final scene.

The eye of the young man kindled. His breath came and went rapidly, hissing through his clinched teeth, while his broad chest rose and fell under the influence of suppressed excitement.

"He *must* be rescued," he said, in a low, determined tone.

"A hundred men mout do it, but nary two alive kin," replied Old Grizzly. "Come, come, lad, don't go an' lose y'ur head ag'in. The man is a goner es sartin es death an' the grave. But, dang my ole moccasins, ef I don't feel sorry fur him, fur he ar' game an' no mistake."

"But can we not make a sudden charge, create a panic and free him in the surprise? We may give him a chance for life."

"Give him a chance fur life, hey?" growled the old hunter. "Yes, an' lose our own a-tryin' it. No, lad, it would on'y be givin' 'em three to cut the'r cantankerous tantrums about 'stead uv one. The man ar' got to die an' thar ain't no poss'ble help fur it."

"Oh, do not let us stand by and see that man perish by such terrible torture! Let us do something."

"I will compromise with y'u," said the old hunter, drawing back the hammer of his rifle. "I can't save the poor feller's life, but I kin save him from burnin'."

"How? how?" was the eager inquiry.

"With this," replied Grizzly, softly patting the stock of his piece. "From whar I stand I kin send a bullet squar' between his eyes, so squar' thet he'll never know what hurt him, an' ef thet won't be a marcy I can't see as what will."

"It will! it will! if he *cannot* be saved; but it is an awful thing, uncle Grizzly."

"But, mind you, my lad, the crack uv this rifle'll bring the hull tribe onto us, an' then the on'y chance ar' to lite out an' depend on good, hard runnin'—an' a heap uv it."

"I know. I know!" was the steady response.

"Ar' ye ready?" asked the bear-tamer, as he slowly drew the rifle to his face.

"I am."

Higher and higher rose the deadly barrel; the level was reached, and the eye of the marksman, who *never* missed his aim, glanced through the forked sight and rested upon the center of the prisoner's forehead.

Without a quiver the finger rested upon the trigger; an other instant and the pressure would be applied, when, suddenly, and with a low exclamation of surprise, the bear-tamer lowered the piece, and stood gazing in open-mouthed wonder, upon a startling apparition that had appeared as though from out the earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE APPARITION.

OUT from the dense forest on the right of the Indian village dashed a horse of a pure white color, upon whose back was seated a woman, dressed in a gaudy, half-civilized costume, her feet incased in moccasins, and a bright blue shawl wrapped around her waist, with one end flowing over her shoulder, while her long black hair streamed far out, like the mane of the horse, and with a wild, eager look, she dashed swiftly forward toward the amazed prisoner.

At her side galloped a large brown bear, seemingly as intent as his mistress upon some errand, and keeping his position as close to her as though he was a favorite dog whose affection could never permit him to pass beyond her sight.

Right through the surging crowd of infuriated savages the white horse and his fearless rider dashed, while close behind, snapping right and left, and growling frightfully, the huge brown bear followed, seemingly a faithful guardian over the safety of his mistress.

Where but an instant before there had reigned such a tumult of fierce yells and violent gesticulations, now rested a silence as complete as though some magic power had been used to enforce it.

Never for an instant halting or hesitating, but with her gaze fixed upon the now staring captive, the strange being rode forward at full speed, the astounded and affrighted throng parting upon either side, leaving a clear avenue even to the stake.

This it required but a moment for the rider to reach, when quick as thought, the blade of a long, keen knife flashed in the sunlight, and the woman, bending far over, applied the edge to the bonds that confined the doomed man. With a sharp crack they parted, and the prisoner stood free!

A single motion of the woman's hand indicated to him his next act.

Leaping upon the pile of fagots, by which he was surrounded, he placed his right hand upon his preserver's shoulder, and lightly vaulted upon the white steed's back.

The rein was given the horse; and, heading obliquely across the open, and directly toward where the bear-tamer and his companion lay concealed, the strange cavalcade swept like a whirlwind from before the eyes of the still completely paralyzed Indians.

It was evident that this apparition was not unknown to the Blackfeet. The sudden recoiling, the universal terror, so great as to actually deprive them of motion, their remaining quiescent while the prisoner was being carried off in their very faces, all showed the powerful influence that was exerted upon their untutored minds by the woman, the white horse and their savage companion.

But the spell was not of long duration. At once the loud, clear voice of the chief rose upon the air; a few rapid commands and the charm was broken. Again the fierce desire for vengeance asserted itself, and, with yells of rage a score of lithe, active warriors darted forward in pursuit.

"Look, boyee, look!" exclaimed Old Grizzly, in strong excitement. "By the everlastin' catamount, the critter, whoever she ar', 'll hev the hull tribe onto us!"

Such, indeed, seemed to be the case; for, as we have stated, the wild rider, in leaving the Indian camp, bore directly down upon the spot occupied by the two hunters.

As the bear-tamer ceased speaking, the white horse dashed by within ten paces of the oak behind which they stood, and vanished like a meteor in the heavy timber beyond.

Seemingly wrapped in wonder and lost to the peril of the moment, Alfred Badger was gazing in the direction whence the apparition had vanished.

"Ar' ye stark, starin' mad, boyee? Don't ye see the varmin ar' onto us?" and the powerful hand of the old hunter grasped the young man's collar and jerked him round to face the coming danger.

"We must—"

"Yes, we must, an' thet durned quick! Away with ye, and ef ever ye *did* travel, now's the time to do it ag'in."

But the movement was too late.

Quick as were the motions of the two men, as they sprung back into the chaparral, the keen eyes of the savages were quicker, and, as they caught sight of their fresh game, a dozen warriors headed directly for them.

Used to such emergencies, the bear-tamer, after speaking a word of caution to Alfred, turned sharply to the left, with the intention of gaining the broken ground along the base of the hills above, where, amid the ravines and heavy undergrowth, he hoped to give the redskins the slip.

For something like half a hundred yards the two ran side by side, while shrill and clear pealed the yells of the pursuing braves.

"Ef we can make the—" but the old hunter's words were cut short in a most unexpected manner.

They were skirting a line of thick undergrowth that ran parallel with their course, and between them, or partially so, and the advancing braves. While running along this cover the bear-tamer spoke; but with a shrill whoop of exultation a warrior sprung out of the thicket directly in the hunter's path, and almost before he had alighted upon his feet the tomahawk left his hand and came cutting the air in rapid evolutions with terrific force and precision.

His quick eye saved Old Grizzly from the stroke, and, as he dodged, he drew his knife, and with the heavy blade held between thumb and forefinger, he swung the weapon aloft and hurled it with fatal certainty full at the exposed breast of the warrior, who now was almost in arm's reach.

With a sickening *thud* the blade struck fair upon the point, cutting through bone, cartilage and muscle. The Indian went down without a groan.

In a second's time the hunter had recovered his knife, and the two again turned to fly.

It was too late; the bear-tamer and Alph found themselves surrounded.

"Thar's no mercy to be looked fur hyar!" shouted Old Grizzly. "Back to back, boyee, an' don't let ther imps ketch y'ur eye shet. Now, then, at 'em!"

He swung his rifle to his face, and a leading brave fell, pierced through the brain.

"Thet counts one!" shouted the reckless bear-tamer. "Open on 'em, boyee, with y'ur pepper-box! Them's the ticket!" he continued, as the crack, crack of Alph's revolver began to be heard.

Upon one side the savages were held at bay by the deadly repeater, but, with the bear-tamer, it was different. His rifle was empty, and they closed in on him for hand-to-hand work.

With a yell like that of a wounded panther, first calling to the young hunter to "look out," Old Grizzly sprung right in their midst.

"Y'u want close work, do ye?" he shouted. "Whoop! hyer it ar'!" and laying about him with deadly effect, the indomitable man fairly bore back the press and cleared the immediate field of assailants.

"Keep y'ur back stiff, Alph, my boyee!" he then called; "thar ain't no chance uv gettin' outen this; but, by ther everlastin' catamount, we'll show these p'izen imps how to die game."

"I'm good for three more, I think," coolly replied his young companion, holding up the heavy six-shooter. "And when this is empty, I'll go into them as you have done," and again he turned back with Old Grizzly to confront the fast-increasing number of warriors now howling with rage at the loss of their former prisoner, or uttering yells of exultation at the prospect of capturing two instead.

The circle soon was complete. On every side hideously-painted faces glared out from bush or thicket. They could have shot the two hunters where they stood, but this they meant not to do. To take them alive; to see them suffer the horrible tortures of the stake, in place of the other, was their object.

Like hungry wolves the warriors crept from cover to cover, gradually closing the cordon of death. Suddenly, with a yell, they charged; but as suddenly a new element bounded into the combat, that, while it caused the Indians to recoil for the moment, gave fresh hope to the hearts of the two hard-pressed men.

A man, with long hair and beard, and fierce of aspect, with no covering for his head, with a huge knife in his hand, and without uttering a word, landed at one bound in the very center of

the group, and began slashing right and left, with a fury that was indescribable!

It was the captive of the stake!

CHAPTER III.

THE AVENGER.

"Cuss my moccasins, ef this ain't queer," muttered Old Grizzly. "Just got out of the fryin'-pan an' hyar he is in the fire again. Guess he hates these red niggers *some*! Why he's a perfect hurrican'! See him thar! Whoop! Go it, ole feller! I'm with you!" he shouted, as, with his terrible clubbed rifle swung aloft, he sprung to the stranger's side and joined him in his furious attack upon the Blackfeet.

It was the golden opportunity, and the young hunter added his prestige to the defense, by cracking away with his revolver, carefully husbanding his ammunition, so that each shot might produce due moral as well as material effect.

Clearing their way, at one side, the three white men dashed a distance of several rods toward a narrow gorge, and then again facing about, they retreated, fighting step by step.

It was a terrible combat. The whites were pressed so hard that they had no chance to run, and could only step backward, striking and fighting as they went.

The Indians exposed themselves with unparalleled audacity, a certain indication that they considered it a matter of the greatest moment to capture but not to kill the men.

In falling back, Alfred had kept slightly behind the others, and when they reached a point where the ravine made a sharp bend to the right, he disappeared around it, and was for the moment lost sight of.

It was a mistaken act.

Two of the pursuing warriors had taken to the hillside, with a view to flank the whites, and at the moment when the curve hid the elder hunters from view, they simultaneously broke cover within a few feet of the young hunter, and together hurled themselves upon him. Taken completely by surprise, Alfred had no opportunity to use his revolver, and, even before he could utter a cry for assistance, he was borne to the earth and bound, not, however, until he had received a stunning blow upon the head from a tomahawk. A moment later he was being borne away to the village.

With renewed yells of triumph the redskins pressed rapidly forward, striving to close in with the two whites and end the conflict by overpowering them from sheer weight of numbers.

"We ar' got to make a break hyer," said the bear-tamer. "Shall we part er stick it out together?" he asked.

"You must decide that question," replied the released captive. "I will be guided by your judgment in the matter."

"Well, now, that's hoss sense. The best way of gittin'— Look out! thar they kim! Give the varmin' p'izen!" he shouted, swinging aloft his now blood-reeking rifle.

Once more the two men were seemingly beyond hope of escape, when, for the second time, the white horse and his fearless rider, still accompanied by the brown bear, appeared upon the scene!

So sudden was their appearance that it seemed as though they had sprung from out the earth near at hand!

As before, the effect of the apparition was most extraordinary upon the superstitious warriors.

With one accord they broke in wild dismay and fled, howling with terror, down the ravine up which they had fought their way at such loss of life.

"Well, by the everlastin' catamount, ef this hyer don't beat enny thing 'as ever I see," exclaimed Old Grizzly. "I'm goin' to find—dang my old moccasins ef I do nuther, fur yander she goes like a streak uv white lightnin', her an' the hoss an' the b'ar, too!"

It was as the bear-tamer said. Already some distance off the wild rider could be seen urging the white steed to rapid flight.

"Hullo! Whar the blazes ar' the boyee?" suddenly exclaimed Old Grizzly, as he for the first time missed Alfred.

The stranger made no reply to the question; indeed he did not seem to hear it. He stood as if spell-bound, gazing after the fast-fading figure of the white horse's rider.

"Hullo, you thar!" again spoke Old Grizzly, who was fast losing his patience. "What yur standin' thar moonin' about when I tell y'u the *lad ar' missin'*!"

"Pardon me!" courteously replied the man. "My thoughts were elsewhere. The young

man, I have no doubt, is safe. We have heard no yell that would indicate a capture. I must be off. I must follow that white horse and see *who* is his rider. A woman! I must follow her!"

"Well, I'll be dod-durned ef I don't b'leeve the hull face uv the airth ar' topsy-turvy 'bout this hyer woman!" exclaimed Old Grizzly. "Go! Sartinly, ef yer want to, an' ef yer wants ter find me ag'in, why, jess strike thet line uv timmer yander by the highest peak thet pokes up, an' yur'll be apt to find my ranch."

"Thanks!" replied the other, turning to go. "I must—"

"One question, stranger," said Grizzly. "I hain't no cur'osity, you see. Never hed none in my life, but takin' all sarcumstances inter consideration, as the feller sez, I *would* like to know *who* you ar'."

For an instant the stranger hesitated; then, suddenly facing about, and drawing his tall form to its utmost height, he said, in a low, stern voice:

"I am Warrama, 'The Avenger,'" and was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEAR'S NEST.

"The d—l you ar'?" exclaimed Old Grizzly, gazing after the retreating figure with a look of comical surprise. "Wal, now, I've hearn a good deal about thet chap, but I didn't look to meet him hyar. They *do* say he's made more widders in the Blackfoot tribe nor enny man on the border, an' thet's sayin' a good deal. I don't wonder no longer thet ther imps war a-howlin' an' yowlin' around the stake the way they did, fur when they roped thet chap 'twur a big lick. An' then thet other critter. Dang my old moccasins ef I don't b'leeve the kentry ar' gettin' turned upside downwards. He is goin' fur her, he says. Well, all I hev to say, ar' thet I wish him luck, fur ef he ever ketches up with *that* hoss, I'm a red nigger. But, the lad! What ef the imps shed 'a' snaked him? I could stand e'en a'most enny thing but *that*, fur I've got ter be powerful fond uv him, an' no mistake. A prisoner! Well, mebbly he ar', but ef they hev got him, by the eternal it'll take the hull Blackfoot nation to keep him, es long es I'm foot-loose."

Pausing a few minutes longer, the while looking wistfully around, as if expecting to see his young friend emerge from the bushes, the bear-tamer shook his head once or twice, and then, as though obeying a sudden prompting, he threw his rifle upon his shoulder, and started toward the belt of timber he had pointed out to the *Avenger*.

Carefully threading his way along a thin line of bushes, still uncertain as to whether the Blackfeet had recovered from the panic into which they had, for the second time, been thrown, the bear-tamer struck out rapidly as though bent upon the performance of some newly-conceived idea.

A walk of less than half an hour brought him to the edge of the timber, and here pausing, he narrowly scanned the country behind in every part.

Seemingly satisfied, he turned and plunged into the chaparral, turning and twisting here and there so as to blind his trail, until he arrived in front of a tall precipice, that to all appearances barred all further progress. To the uninitiated such would have been the case, but not so with the bear-tamer.

At the base of the cliff, whose broken face was thickly covered with clinging limbs and vines, there lay a huge boulder that had, at some distant day, fallen from above. Around this huge rock Old Grizzly passed, and from thence into a narrow passway or fissure that cut through the cliffs to an open space beyond. Through this narrow rift in the rock the bear-tamer made his way, and presently emerged into a small amphitheater, walled in upon every side but one, by great rocks and cliffs that lay piled one upon another to a great height. Upon the right as one entered from the passway, the open country could be seen, stretching away toward where the Indian village lay. But here, as elsewhere, the place was inaccessible save by the entrance we have spoken of. Crossing the level sward the observer would be brought to a stand by a yawning gulf opening beneath his feet, the chasm running the entire length of the seemingly exposed park, and rendering it absolutely impossible of approach.

Upon the side opposite that by which the hunter entered, a large cavern opened its black mouth in the side of the cliff. The scene was a most remarkable one. Not only by reason of the singular natural formation, but because of

certain other lively adjuncts. Scattered about the grassy plot, in various attitudes, standing, squatting and lying down at full length, were a number of bears, large and small, black, brown and grizzly.

All were fastened by chains to heavy stakes driven in the earth, though allowed considerable liberty in length of tether. Standing in watchful attitude near the inner termination of the passway, was a huge dog, a cross of the mastiff and bull, his great head lifted to catch the sound of approaching footsteps that were evidently familiar.

As the bear-tamer emerged into the little glade, a perfect storm of sound suddenly broke upon the air. Howls, whines and grunts of glad recognition greeted his advent, while above all rose the deep, full note of the dog, as he bounded forward in wild delight.

"Well, now, ef thet ain't a 'happy famby' I don't know what ar'!" ejaculated Old Grizzly, with a chuckle. "Down, Blinker! Do'ee want ter t'ar thur buckskin cl'ar off? Who'll mend 'em up ag'in, I'd like tu know?"

The gambols of the dog ceased instantly, and the bear-tamer proceeded to inspect and feed his family.

The bears, as the dog had done, all evinced the utmost pleasure in the presence of their master, eagerly seeking the slightest caress, and evincing the most comical jealousy when other than themselves were being petted.

The minor members were quickly passed over, and then came the king of them all.

Near by the mouth of the cavern was fastened a monstrous grizzly, of enormous size and exceedingly fierce aspect. When the hunter first entered, and while the others were displaying their joy, he rose to his feet, and stood gravely surveying the scene, uttering no sound and displaying no impatience. He knew his turn would come at the proper time and calmly waited for it.

"Well, Sampson, my rosebud, how ar' you?" said Grizzly, fearlessly advancing, and laying his hand caressingly on the great brute's head.

"Hungry, hey? Well, y'ur allers thet. But yer shall hev the biffer in good time," and so saying, he turned and entered the cave. This had been fitted up as the bear-tamer's residence, and had been made a comfortable and convenient place.

Piles of skins, traps, ropes and chains, one or two extra rifles and their accouterments, together with sundry odds and ends necessary to the mode of life, were lying promiscuously about the place.

It at once became evident that Old Grizzly had not entered his home with the intention of remaining long.

"Thar's work ahead," he muttered, as he took his rifle from his shoulder and leaned it against the rock, then stepping to a crevice in the wall, he took out a bunch of tow and returned to where the piece stood. "Your turn fust, Fire Fangs, my beauty," he said, again picking up the rifle. "Whar nice shootin' ar' got to be did, thar's nothin' like hev'n' the tool in order."

For several minutes he worked busily at the gun, in the mean while muttering to himself.

"Yes, siree, thar's hefty work ahead, thet ar' ef the boyee ar' in ther han's uv the imps. To think it shed ever hev come to this. The lad sn'aked under my nose an' me not know it. Well, well, it's the fortin' uv all who take the'r chances in Injin-fightin', an' I'll warrant the boyee warn't took without a deal of trouble. The imps ar' in the'r cantankerous tantrums now, an' ef enny thing ar' to be did, it must be did right away, ef not sooner. I do wonder ef thet chap as calls himself the Avenger 'll kim back? He's a team into a scrimmage, an' he would be a powerful help in gettin' the lad outen ther grip uv ther Blackfeet, but kem or not, it don't make no difference nohow. Ef ther boyee ar' in thet village, he comes out, ha'r an' all, er else we both goes under together."

It was plain to be seen that the stern old bear-tamer was deeply moved. As we have said, he loved Alfred Badger as his own son, and it never entered his head to do anything else than risk, and if necessary, lose his life in attempting his rescue.

Having cleaned Fire Fangs to his satisfaction, he called in the dog with the intention of feeding him before he began that work with his pets outside.

Hardly had the dog entered before a fearful tumult was heard without. The bears were again aroused from some cause, and to the quick ear of the hunter the indications were that this time the howls were those of rage, not pleasure.

"Faggots an' flints, what's up now?" he exclaimed, casting down the chunk of meat he was about dividing for the dog, and rushing from the cave, catching up a heavy club as he went.

A moment before the scene had been merely a singular one, now it was fearful, for at a glance the bear-tamer took in the situation of affairs.

Upon the extreme right, not far from the edge of the precipice, was chained a huge black bear, but recently caught, and hence not thoroughly under control.

Here the greatest noise pervaded, the angry growls and snarls of the brute being mingled with the exclamations of a human voice. With half a dozen panther-like leaps, the bear-tamer crossed the little glade, and rushed headlong into the combat that was going on. He knew not how it came about. Nor did he take time to consider. He only saw that a human being, an Indian lad, was held in the deadly embrace of his savage pet, and felt that he must rescue him.

And it was time that assistance should be rendered.

The youth was fighting desperately, but his only weapons were his hands, and these were totally useless for good.

The bear had thrown round his victim his powerful forearms, drawing him in with crushing force, and seeking to fasten his terrible fangs upon the bared throat.

As the bear-tamer sprung forward he caught an appealing look from the young Indian, and, rendered furious at this gross breach of discipline in one of his pupils, he rushed in, whirling the heavy club above his head.

The bear was evidently cowed, to a certain extent, by the presence of his master, but nevertheless ceased not an instant in his savage attack.

"Stoop boy! Stoop!" shouted Old Grizzly, as he sprung from side to side, striving to obtain a blow at the brute's head without endangering the young Indian's life.

So rapid were the evolutions of the combatants, that it was, for a time, impossible to effect his purpose. The lad, with ready presence of mind, divined the hunter's object, and strove to obey the order to "stoop." But, the grasp that held him was of iron, and he was powerless to move.

"Faggots an' flints! the boyee 'll be chewed up," exclaimed the bear-tamer, in great excitement. "Let go, y'u durned varmint! let go er—"

Without finishing the sentence, he dropped the club and hurled himself upon the huge brute, grasping the shaggy throat with both hands, and literally bearing the beast backward to the earth.

In falling, the bear loosed his hold, and, with a joyful exclamation, the Indian boy sprung to his feet and leaped on one side.

"Re'ch me thet club, youngster," panted Old Grizzly, as he clung to the brute's throat.

The weapon was instantly handed, and, loosing his right hand, the bear-tamer grasped it, and instantly dealt a stunning blow over the snout that quickly settled the combat.

"Thar, y'u durned brute! take thet an' think over it!" he said, as he rose to his feet and turned to the boy.

"Y'u've had a narrer go fur it, youngster, I tell y'u. How the blazes did y'u come hyar, ennyhow?"

Without answering the question the young Indian stepped gracefully forward, and, taking the hard hand of the bear-tamer in both his own, looked up into his face and simply said:

"The Man of the Bears has saved the life of Leaping Elk, and he is grateful. Silver Tongue, my sister, the flower of the Blackfeet tribe, has sent me to him."

"What ar' it, lad? What ar' it?" eagerly asked the old hunter.

"Let the Man of the Bears meet my sister, Silver Tongue, at the rock by the fallen waters, when the moon is above the mountain in the east. She will then speak the words he must know."

"Dang the moon an' the fallin' waters! What does the gal want uv me? Speak it out, lad," exclaimed the bear-tamer, impatiently.

"Leaping Elk can not speak. Let the hunter obey," and quick as thought, the Indian boy turned, dashed across the open space, and, with a wave of the hand, disappeared within the narrow chasm.

"Cuss the boyee! Heyr's me dodgin' about the bresh an' no knowin' whar I'll fetch up. But I'll go ef I runs headfor'most into the hull tribe, fur who knows but it may be about the

boyee that this gal wants to jabber to me? Wimmen is queer critters; white skin or red hides, they ar', possum to my persimmons, they ar'; but, I'll bet thet black b'ar's bloody snout ag'in' a beaver's sneeze, thet ef a she-male, with es purty a handle es 'Silver Tongue,' hev see'd my boyee, she hev become civerlized ez quick es turnin' a summerset, an' I'm goin' fur her 'thout winkin'! Hyer, purp! Y'u'er on guard ag'in. Jes' y'u keep outen my bed, an' walk aroun' hyer like General Jackson guardin' the Treasury, an' ef thet black b'ar gives ye any of his sass go for him! D'ye hear?"

The "purp" evidently did hear, for he at once strode out into the area around the bears and commenced his guard walk. Old Grizzly nodded his head approvingly, and retreated to his cave to prepare for his night's work.

Hardly had he left ere the dog set up a low, warning growl, and Grizzly reappeared.

"What ar' it, Blink? More Injun boy? Jes' hold y'ur wind an' wait." The dog relapsed into silence and footsteps were plainly heard coming up through the narrow pass.

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG EAGLE SHOWS HIS TALONS.

WHEN Alfred Badger found himself a captive in the hands of the Blackfeet, his first thought was for his old friend, the bear-tamer; and, as they bore him forward, he cast many anxious glances on every side to discover if he, too, had met the fate that had befallen himself. But he saw no evidence of the old hero's capture, and there was comfort in the thought that he had escaped—so much, indeed, that Alfred did not even doubt of his own ultimate release.

On reaching the vicinity of the village, the conductors and captive were met by the entire population, save those who were still out in pursuit of the bear-tamer and he who had so recently escaped their clutches; and there ensued a scene of extravagant joy and display of gratified revenge, that fairly beggars description.

Surrounded on all sides by howling braves and screeching squaws and children, the prisoner was borne forward toward the village, where the chiefs and older warriors were already assembled to decide his fate. As though taking a lesson from the rapidity with which events were transpiring, the Indians had determined to act promptly in this case, and, by so doing, place the captive beyond the possibility of rescue.

With this view, Alfred Badger was led directly to the council-house, where, pausing a moment, he was exhibited to the assembled chiefs and then taken away to the strong lodge for safe keeping.

In the present case, the assembling of the council to decide upon the fate of the prisoner was a mere matter of form. He was doomed from the moment of capture; but custom prevailed, and the lodge was assembled.

As a well-known warrior rose to speak the moment the council was opened, Big Hand, the head chief, exclaimed:

"Let Iron Heel speak. His words shall be heard."

Instantly a profound silence fell upon the assembly, and presently the deep, full voice of the Blackfoot brave broke the silence.

"Two moons have passed since Iron Heel led the warriors of Big Hand against the villages that lie far toward the rising sun. We burned their villages and took many scalps. While on the return path my brothers' hearts were filled with gladness, while Iron Heel came back to his lodge in sorrow. *Wun-nes-tou*, the son of Iron Heel, fell before the rifle of the white man. The lodge of Iron Heel is lonely. Soon the snows of winter will whiten his hair and stiffen the limbs that are now strong. Who will then provide the lodge of Iron Heel with buffalo, and the skins of the wild animals to clothe himself and squaws? The White Buffalo has gone. I must have another in his place. By his right as warrior of the Blackfeet, Iron Heel demands that the white captive be brought into the council. He will adopt him as the son he has lost in battle," and the warrior drew himself up and glanced proudly around the circle of scowling faces.

Had a hand-grenade been thrown into the midst of the assembled chiefs and braves, the effect would not have been more startling. With one impulse the braves sprung to their feet, and instantly the lodge became a scene of intense excitement, but the harsh commands of Big Hand soon reduced the excited braves to order.

"The words of Iron Heel have entered our

ears," said the chief. "He is a great warrior, and the Blackfeet are proud of his deeds. They mourn with him in the loss of *Wun-nes-tou*, for no braver heart nor stronger arm went into battle with our enemies. But has Iron Heel thought well over his purpose? When has white blood ever proven other than the enemy of the red-man? Will not my brother fear that he may take as a slave into his lodge?"

"He has thought," answered the brave. "The spirit of *Wun-nes-tou* has told him to take the white warrior to his lodge. I have spoken."

Again were the murmurs of dissent heard, and vengeful eyes glared upon the determined brave. But they were powerless to interfere. Iron Heel possessed the right, by reason of customs handed down from remote generations, and they dared not interfere, for that custom had become a law.

"Let the white captive be brought into the council," said Big Hand.

In a few moments Alfred Badger stood, without bonds, in the presence of the assembled Blackfeet.

There was yet one hope for the discontented. If the prisoner refused the proffered adoption, and preferred death at the stake, then would the purpose of Iron Heel be defeated.

An involuntary murmur of admiration went round the grim circle as the young man stepped to the center. His splendid physical development, so clearly indicating extraordinary strength and activity; the clear, unflinching gray eye, and undaunted bearing, together with the fact of his having behaved so gallantly during the combat of the morning, all served to impress the warriors, who admired nothing so much as the characteristics we have mentioned.

Without further discussion of the matter, the chief, Big Hand, who spoke English sufficiently well for all necessary purposes, put the question of adoption into the tribe, with startling abruptness to the young man.

Before Alfred could reply, however, Iron Heel again demanded to be heard.

He explained to the captive his motive in thus acting—drew a pathetic picture of his loneliness since the death of his favorite son—told him that old age was creeping fast upon him, and asked that, instead of going to the stake, he would enter his lodge and fill the place that was vacant.

To the young hunter the proposition was startling in the extreme. He had come to consider death as certain, unless the bear-tamer should succeed in rescuing him. Of this new phase of the matter he had never even dreamed.

But he was not long in deciding the question. The act of accepting the adoption did not bind him not to attempt escape at the first opportunity. At any rate, time would be gained, and that was everything.

As though actuated by a sudden impulse, he strode across the open space within the circle to where Iron Heel stood, and frankly extended his hand to the brave. With an exclamation of joy, the latter grasped the proffered member.

"Pe-toh-pee-kiss—the Young Eagle—is welcome to the heart of Iron Heel. He shall be to him as his eldest son," he said.

The ceremony of adoption was fixed for the next day, and, until that was performed, Alfred must still remain, ostensibly, a prisoner. At a sign from the chief, he was led from the council chamber to the strong lodge.

The council was about to break up, when suddenly there arose from without a series of wild and startling yells that evidently boded no good to the prisoner.

For an instant Iron Heel paused to listen; and then, as the sounds grew more furious, he dashed from the lodge, closely followed by the others—the chief, Big Hand, among the number.

Nor was the warrior too quick in his motions, for a single glance showed that he was on the point of losing his newly-adopted son.

On leaving the council-house, attended by his guards, Alfred Badger found the open space that surrounded the building densely crowded with warriors, young men and squaws, who, up to that moment, had maintained so profound a silence that none within knew of their presence there. The news had gone abroad in the village that the captive was to be adopted into the tribe, and, furious at losing their prey, they had gathered there to await his coming out. The guards saw at once that their charge was endangered, and closed up on either side, determined to protect him at all hazards.

They were allowed to pass half-way across the open, when, at a signal from a tall warrior, the assault was suddenly made. The guards were seized and torn away, and the young

hunter left standing alone and unarmed in the midst of the infuriated multitude.

As the savages closed round him, yelling like demons, and brandishing their knives and tomahawks, the young hunter braced himself, and, as the leading savage came within reach, his right arm shot out with terrific force, catching the Blackfoot square between the eyes, and hurling him senseless to the earth.

Almost before the savage had measured his length, the young man had wrenched the light ax from his grasp, and turned, like a lion at bay, upon the pressing throng.

A second savage sprung forward, seeking to use his knife, but he went down with a cloven skull. And then, still whirling his weapon in rapid circles, Alfred changed the state of affairs and himself became the assailant.

His only chance lay in reaching the council-house, and thither he proceeded to cut his way.

So furious was his onslaught, so true the blows of the tomahawk in his powerful grasp, that the Indians bore back for a moment, leaving an almost open road to the desired goal.

But a new ally now appeared upon the scene.

Iron Heel, tomahawk in hand, rushed to the rescue, scattering the young braves right and left as he came. In a moment he had reached the captive's side, where, placing one arm protectingly upon his shoulder, he sternly bade the howling warriors stand back.

During the slight lull thus produced, Big Hand appeared, and at a few words from him the crowd dispersed. But now the complexion of affairs were again changed, and even the brow of Iron Heel grew clouded as he surveyed the scene.

One warrior lay with skull cloven to the chin, a noted young brave, while two or three others bore ugly marks of the young hunter's prowess. Blood had again been shed, and that in the very heart of the Indian village!

It mattered not that it had been done in self-defense. A white man had slain a red warrior, and there must be an account rendered.

Alfred Badger was borne off to the strong lodge, while preparations were made to again assemble the council to take into consideration the new position occupied by the captive.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE OR DEATH.

EVENING has closed in upon the Indian village, and the chiefs and warriors whose deeds have earned the right to meet and deliberate upon the affairs of the tribes, have assembled in the council chamber to pass sentence, for life or death, upon the Young Eagle, the adopted son of Iron Heel.

Iron Heel still maintained his right to adopt the young man, and was determined to defend that right to the last. The young man had, even so soon, taken a deep hold upon the Indian's affections. A fancied resemblance to the dead son in the living one strengthened the feeling, until the rugged nature of the Indian was worked up to the highest pitch.

It was a stormy meeting, and the scowling faces, and the dark hands that more than once grasped the handles of their knives, threatened again and again to break out in open rupture. A hair's breadth, as it were, saved them more than once, and it was hard to predict what the result would be.

With rude but forcible eloquence, Iron Heel pleaded for the life of the young captive. He maintained that recent events had in no way lessened his right to adopt his son. He was already adopted, he declared; was a member of the tribe as much as any warrior present, and, as such, had the right to protect his life.

The young men of the tribe had assailed him while under the safeguard of Big Hand himself, and he appealed to the chief to say whether or not the assailed was right to defend himself.

In reply to this, the majority insisted that the present was an exceptional case; that they had, with the assistance of the Young Eagle, been robbed of their hated enemy, the Red Avenger, the desolator of their tribe, who had been torn from their grasp; they must have a substitute in his stead. The Young Eagle had been captured in battle; he had slain half a dozen of their best warriors then, and now, besides that, he must begin his slaughter anew in their village and before their squaws. They must have a victim; if not the Avenger, then the Young Eagle.

Iron Heel now grew more furious than ever. "Pe-toh-pee-kiss is no longer a white man," he exclaimed, with the passionate eloquence of his race; "he's an Indian! he's a Blackfoot as much as I am, or our great chief, Big Hand. He

is not the son of the white man; he is *my* son; my child! What have I done?—what has my child done, that *he* should suffer death for the Red Avenger? Did I not gather the sticks and place them at his feet to burn him? Did I not pursue the white horse? Did I not fight to secure him, and have I not the wounds still bleeding that I received in attempting to regain him for you? And for this I am to lose the child of my adoption. Surely, the eyes of my brothers are blinded, and their hearts are shut, that they do not see the great wrong they seek to do me."

And the indignant warrior again laid his hand upon the knife in his girdle, and looked defiantly around, as if daring any one to gainsay his words.

"My brother speaks without thought," replied Big Hand, the great chief of the Blackfeet, in his deliberate way. "Who is there of Manitou's children that are braver than Iron Heel? Who is fleetest of foot? Who bounds forward with greater delight than he when the sound of the war-whoop is heard in the forest? At whose name do the Crows and Sioux tremble in their wigwams? Whose body bears the wounds of a hundred battles upon it? Whose lodge-pole is hung with the scalp-locks of his enemies? It is that of Iron Heel, the bravest of the Blackfeet."

This truly eloquent apostrophe was accompanied with the most graceful gesture, and the whole thing was managed with such skill that the tempest in the breast of the subject was greatly quieted, and he was prepared for what followed.

In the figurative way characteristic of the American Indian, the chief then proceeded to state his "compromise." Declaring that no one wished the blood of Young Eagle, he yet agreed with his warriors that he should be compelled to atone for his and the Red Avenger's crimes, so far as possible, if the latter could not be secured; yet, out of respect for the great warrior, Iron Heel, the execution should be delayed three days, during which every effort should be made to capture the Red Avenger; but, if three days passed without securing the great offender, then the Young Eagle should be compelled to take his place.

Like all compromises, this was unsatisfactory to both parties, each one believing that he was conceding too much. Iron Heel, earnestly, but less excitedly, still plead for the security of his adopted, toward whom he unquestionably held the strongest affection.

But it was useless. The chief had uttered his decision, and it was irrevocable. His own partisans applauded it, although much disappointed that their anticipated enjoyment was postponed for even so short a time as three days.

It was declared that the young white man should remain under strict surveillance until the expiration of the three days when of course the decision of the council would be carried out. The moment the Avenger should be brought in, Young Eagle would be released, to suffer no molestation at the hands of the Blackfeet, who, thenceforth, would trust him as a friend and brother.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOUNTAIN COMBAT.

"I MUST learn more of this," muttered the singular man, who left Old Grizzly so unceremoniously, as he strode rapidly away, heading straight for the mountain, up whose side the Wild Huntress had disappeared.

He labored hard before he found himself upon the summit of the foot-hills; but, reaching it, he detected the footprints of the horse and bear, marked so distinctly that he followed them without difficulty.

He suspected at once that somewhere in the wildest fastness of this place the mysterious woman made her home.

"Wherever it is, I shall discover it," was the determination of the pursuer, and he at once pushed onward, across a shallow valley, and began breasting the rugged steep beyond.

The trail he was following led directly up the mountain, and, as the afternoon was now well advanced, he made extra exertions to hurry forward, so as not to permit the night to intervene between him and the success of his plans.

Up, up he toiled, the path, or rather way, growing more and more rugged and difficult.

As he advanced, the woods became thinner, and the rocks more abundant. Some of these were of great size, and the trail wound round them, with many deviations, but with a sharply defined distinctiveness, which proved that it had been used a long time, either by the white horse or wild animals.

Straining on, he was suddenly startled by an outcry, so furious in its character that he knew at once it proceeded from some animal laboring under intense rage or suffering pain.

But not from one creature alone did these outcries come. The guttural growls betokened the presence of a bear, and the frenzied whinnying, the terrified horse; while, mingling with both, was the sharp, piercing screech of some wild beast of a different nature from both.

Above all was heard the ringing, but excited voice of a woman, her tones being more clear, making them far more penetrating in their power.

"Seize him! seize him, Brownie! That's a brave fellow! Crush him to death!"

Satisfied that some fearful combat was going on close at hand, the Avenger paused only long enough to make certain of the proper direction, and then he dashed forward with renewed energy and speed.

Leaping into a narrow gully, which sloped longitudinally up the mountain-side, he ran with great speed for a distance of a hundred yards or so, when, rifle in hand, he darted around the corner of an immense rock, where he found himself face to face with an appalling scene!

One of the fiercest and most dangerous animals of the North-west is known to hunters and trappers as the mountain panther, and even the renowned grizzly bear is not held in greater fear than is he. Fortunately he is scarce, else the dangers of the prairies would be doubled.

As the unknown dashed around the rock, he saw one of these dreaded animals engaged in a terrible combat with the white horse and bear, that always accompanied the huntress.

The panther had evidently leaped down from the rock where he was crouching, upon the horse as he passed beneath and had landed directly upon the neck of his victim, that was now madly and furiously plunging in his endeavors to shake the fierce brute loose, while the brown bear, reared on his hind legs, was growling and doing his best to obey his mistress.

"Seize him, Brownie! Drag him off! That's a brave fellow!"

At the same time she was doing her utmost to gain a shot at the author of all this trouble, but the quick movements of all three made the result of a shot probably as dangerous to each of the trio, and she held back, hoping that she could induce the bear to drag the panther loose, so that she could make the shot sure and certain.

"Brownie! now, quick! at him!" she called, moving around and encouraging her singular pet.

The latter certainly did his best, and he did well. Striking his claws savagely into the flesh of the foe, he wounded him deeply and grievously, and did his utmost to pull him free from the terrified horse; but, with that strange persistency so frequently seen in the feline species, the panther clung only the closer and more determinedly.

The Red Avenger took in the situation at a glance. His whole frame thrilled again with excitement, and springing forward toward the horse, he drove his long hunting-knife deep into the side and back of the panther, exclaiming with set teeth:

"Take that, you brute, if nothing else will answer."

It was a terrible blow, and accomplished what the bear had been so vainly striving to do.

With a terrific yell, or screech of pain, the panther suddenly loosed her hold upon the horse's neck, and wheeling with the rapidity of thought, launched herself full upon the assailant, alighting fairly upon his shoulders, and bearing him backward to the earth.

It was now a struggle for life or death, and fired with pain and desperation, the daring man again drove his knife to the hilt in the body of the panther.

The woman, seeing the imminence of his peril, became almost frantic in her endeavors to save his life; but, she saw, even in that dreadful moment, that it would not do for her to fire. The aim was too uncertain, so, with her own knife in hand, she advanced close to them, and stood ready to strike the decisive blow as soon as the opportunity should come, meanwhile shouting to her bear:

"Brownie, save him! quick!"

The bear seemed to understand fully what was required, and, following the rolling, struggling forms upon the earth for a few seconds, he finally struck a tremendous blow with his paw, the result proving how exceedingly difficult it was to befriend the endangered hun-

ter; for, although the blow was well aimed, so rapidly were man and brute moving, that it fell upon the shoulder of the former, with stunning force, and rendering him practically helpless for the moment in the terrible combat in which he was engaged.

Delay was fatal, as the Avenger was completely at the mercy of the panther, that was excited to the highest pitch of fury by the wound he had received, and, as using her gun was out of the question, the woman clinched her stiletto-like knife, and stooped down so as to discern the spot where to strike.

In an instant the coveted opportunity was gained; and the knife was driven deep into the side of the panther, the point penetrating the vitals of the infuriated animal.

With an ear-splitting screech the panther sprung again in air; alighting on her feet, she made, with open mouth and staring eyes, straight at the huntress, as if she knew that it was the last chance to avenge herself upon her; but her strength gave out, and she rolled over on her side, perfectly lifeless.

The Avenger lay as motionless as the dead panther beside him, not yet having recovered from the stunning effect of the brown bear's blow.

"He breathes, and his heart beats," muttered the strange woman. "He has been roughly handled, poor fellow, but not fatally, thank Heaven. He needs a stimulant, and that, fortunately, I have at hand," and pausing a moment, she gazed earnestly at the pale face of the insensible man, as if perplexed by some undefined idea.

She turned and vanished as completely and entirely as though some "*Open Sesame!*" had admitted her into the solid face of the rock, which had as instantly closed behind her.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW FRIEND.

BIG HAND, the great head chief of the Blackfeet, was the accepted father of Silver Tongue, the most beautiful maiden of the whole tribe. She was about the age of Leaping Elk, and her attractions of person and manner had made her renowned among her people, many of whom had sought her hand; but there was but one who ever touched her heart.

Fleet Foot, the daring son of Iron Heel, had been betrothed to her, and the union was heralded by all as one eminently fit and promising; but, before its accomplishment, Fleet Foot fell in battle, and as the reader has learned, Iron Heel had adopted Pe-toh-pee-kiss, the Young Eagle, in his stead.

The usual season of mourning followed, and then admirers approached Silver Tongue again; but, she repelled them all, and, so far, no one had yet appeared who bore any prospect of succeeding to the place of her lover dead and gone.

But, there was one who suspected that the fire had been rekindled, and only needed a little fanning to excite it into the same enduring, glowing flame.

Silver Tongue had seen the Young Eagle when he so gallantly defended his life against the fearful odds in the council square, and Leaping Elk had marked the brightening of her eye as she looked breathlessly on, and his heart was delighted at the thought that he might secure this beautiful maiden for a sister, after all.

To her, therefore, he determined to go, while the fate of his newly-adopted brother hung trembling in the balance, acquaint her with his peril, and implore her intercession with her father in his behalf. He believed she could do much for him, and he held well-grounded fears of the action of the council.

It was a great trial to Leaping Elk to do this, as he held the wonderful maiden in a sort of reverential awe, as a being who was far above all others of her sex, and who was to be approached only with a deference due to a superior race; and, it was only by keeping in mind the imminent danger of his "brother" that he could summon up enough courage to undertake the task.

But the council had scarcely begun its deliberations, for the second time, when Leaping Elk made his appearance in the lodge of Big Hand, and was ushered into the presence of the queen of the woods.

She was seated on a couch of furs, and received him with unmistakable pleasure, so that the boy felt at ease at once. She was attired in the brilliant dress of the people with whom she dwelt, with the stained eagle feathers in her hair, the rich wampum and beads about her neck and waist, and certainly her dark, lustrous eyes, rounded form, and fine, clear fea-

tures, added a remarkable beauty to her person, and justified the extravagant praise that had been lavished upon her by all the braves of the tribe.

She waved her hand to her visitor, as an invitation to him to be seated, but he preferred to remain standing like a servant in her presence.

"Silver Tongue," said he, in a sad voice, "I have come to ask a great kindness of thee."

She looked wonderingly at him, not dreaming to what he referred, but she replied in the kindness of her heart:

"Leaping Elk is a brave and good lad, and Silver Tongue will always be his friend."

The heart of the young warrior throbbed with delight at this compliment, and with a suffused face, he replied:

"Big Hand is a great chief, and loves his daughter—"

"And Silver Tongue loves him," she hastened to say, taking the words from his mouth.

"It is for that reason I come to her," he continued; "does Silver Tongue know that I have a new brother, one to whom my heart clings as if he were Fleet Foot, my dead mate? Does she know whom I mean?"

"Young Eagle, the white warrior," she answered, with a flushing face and eager eye, that confirmed the suspicion of her young auditor.

"What news have you of him?"

"He is bound and placed in the *strong lodge*—"

"But not to die," answered Silver Tongue.

"Only to await the moment for adoption."

"Silver Tongue saw Pe-toh-pee-kiss when he slew Stu-mick-o-sucks in the council square, and wounded On-ce-pa and other warriors. Did she not?"

"She did, and the Young Eagle struck swift and sure as does the Manitou from the storm-cloud. He is a gallant warrior, and the heart of Silver Tongue is strangely drawn toward him!" she exclaimed, with flushing eyes and heaving bosom. "The Buffalo's Back deserved the blow he got, and the Young Eagle shall not be harmed for dealing it."

"I knew that Silver Tongue looked kindly upon my new brother. Does she, too, love him?" asked the boy, with charming simplicity.

Over face, neck and swelling bosom of the fair girl, for fair she was, a crimson tide swept, but instantly passing away, left her calm as before.

"Surely they will not dare to harm him!" she said, with an inquiring look at her companion.

"I do not know, but I fear they will. The council are now assembled to decide what shall be done. Iron Heel is there to plead for him, but I am afraid there is no hope for him."

Leaping Elk scarcely expected to see the emotion displayed by Silver Tongue upon hearing these tidings. Her dark, lustrous eyes seemed to flash fire, her bosom heaved, and she walked back and forth, moving her beautiful arms in a nervous, restless way, as though suffering from some great pain. For several minutes she did not speak, but appeared as if secretly communing with herself.

Then she suddenly paused, and looking eagerly in the face of the young warrior, asked:

"What is it you wish for me?"

"To intercede with Big Hand; he can not refuse the prayer of his loved daughter, Silver Tongue."

The maiden was silent a moment, and then she spoke in a voice of deep sadness.

"Big Hand is a great warrior, and is stern of heart. He may refuse my prayer, if the council decide that the Young Eagle shall die."

"But you will not refuse to plead for him?" asked the youth, forgetting every thing but his anxiety for his adopted brother.

"I will do *any thing*," she replied, passionately. "I will fall on my knees before him, as soon as he returns to his lodge; I will plead with him as though it were your life or my own that was at stake; but, Big Hand will not let his love for me stand in the way of what he thinks his duty."

"That is all I can ask," replied the grateful Leaping Elk, who turned on his heel to depart.

"Stay," she called out, laying her hand on his arm, and as the youth turned back, she spoke in a hurried undertone:

"You say he is in the *strong lodge*; is there no way he can be helped to escape from there?"

Leaping Elk shook his head.

"They will give us no opportunity; they will watch him night and day. Do what you can with Big Hand."

"I will," she replied, in a tone which showed how deep her interest was in the safety of the imperiled captive, Young Eagle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOUBLE TRAIL.

HARDLY had the Wild Huntress disappeared within the rock when, with a shudder, a quick gasp and spasmodic lifting of the eyelids, the Avenger, so we must continue to call him, came back to life and consciousness.

A blow to render a man of such enormous physical power totally unconscious could have but some bad effect. And, as he rose upon his elbow, and glanced hurriedly round, he became suddenly aware of an acute pain in the shoulder that for an instant caused him to suspect that the arm was dislocated.

Luckily such was not the case. An effort put forth with more determination enabled him to rise, first to his knees, and then to his feet, when, with a still uncertain, wavering eye, he glanced around the little rocky amphitheater in which he stood.

The first object that met his gaze was the dead body of the panther. It lay a few paces distant, the immense head thrown back, the powerful limbs outstretched and fast stiffening in death.

It was a dangerous-looking foe, when living, to encounter, and the man could but congratulate himself upon escaping with life from so terrible a conflict.

With the exception of the dead beast, nothing save the frowning rocks and towering cliffs was to be seen. The woman, the white horse, and the bear had all disappeared, leaving no trace behind by which it could be told whither they had gone.

"This is strange, very strange," he muttered. "Why should she so abruptly leave one who had imperiled his life to save that of her horse, let alone herself? And those pale, sad features! They are familiar, very familiar! And surely I must have seen them elsewhere than in these wilds," and he paused a moment in deep thought.

Suddenly, with a start as though a blow had been dealt him, he exclaimed aloud:

"Great Heaven! if it *should* be! But it can not! it is impossible! for *she* perished, with all the others on that dark and terrible night. And yet, I did not find her body, nor that of the child, when I so carefully searched among the gory corpses that lay around! Stranger things than this have happened, and I *will* solve this mystery."

While so musing, the eye of the speaker chanced to discover a narrow trail, leading off between the large rocks, and tending down the mountain.

This, with his usual promptitude, he determined to follow. There appeared no other mode of leaving the place on horseback save this, and thence he concluded that the mysterious woman had left him by that route.

Once more scanning the surrounding rocks and ledges above, but without discovering the secret passage through which the Huntress had gone, the Avenger left the spot, and began the descent into the valley, that lay far beneath.

Still somewhat weak and sore from the effect of his recent combat, he at first found considerable difficulty in traveling the rugged trail, but as he advanced, he warmed up to the work, and ere long rapidly increased his pace.

In the valley the trail abruptly ended. A shallow creek with rocky bottom seemed to be the termination. Here the horse had entered the stream, and gone either up or down, it could not be told which, as the smooth hard stone and gravelly bottom left no sign to guide even the most experienced eye.

In vain the man searched up and down, and upon the further side. There was not the slightest mark. The trail had disappeared as completely as had the woman when she entered the face of the precipice above.

"She has again escaped me," muttered the Avenger. "But why she should do so, especially after what has occurred, is more than I can understand. There is some mystery here that I will penetrate let come what will. I will seek the bear-tamer, and together we may be enabled to once more get a clew as to this strange being's whereabouts."

The Avenger turned down the valley, passed round the spur of the mountain, and keeping under cover as much as possible, he struck across the hills in the direction where Old Grizzly had said his ranch was located.

A brisk walk of less than an hour brought him to the edge of the timber, beyond which the camp of the bear-tamer lay, and here he paused and looked carefully around for some indication of its whereabouts.

It is more than probable that he would never have found the secret passway into the hunter's

stronghold, but just at that moment, a series of deep, savage growls fell upon his ear, seeming to come from out the very bowels of the mountains.

Advancing cautiously in the direction from whence came the sounds, the Avenger turned the corner of the great boulder that lay in front, and the next moment was carefully feeling his way along the narrow cut.

As he reached the inner termination he was abruptly brought to a standstill by Blinker's deep-mouthed note of alarm, and, almost instantly, the voice of the bear-tamer was heard calling the dog off:

"Down, Blinker! don't ye see the man ar' white? Down, I say!" he continued, savagely, as the great brute still showed signs of attacking. "Fire an' faggots! do you want what I gave the b'ar awhile ago! Hello, stranger! got back, hey? Wal, yur welkim into the buzzum uv my happy family. They're a set o' beauties, ain't they?" said Old Grizzly, waving his hand round so as to include all present in the little amphitheater.

"They are, indeed, my friend," replied the other, "and you—"

"Yes, I ar' fond uv 'em, fur I knows thet's what yur goin' to say. But, tell me, ole mystery, did yur find ther woman, an' ther white hoss, an' ther b'ar?"

"I did find them all, but regret to say that I almost immediately lost them again."

"Yur did! Wal, thet *wur* bad. Found 'em an' then let 'em give ye ther slip! All uv 'em, do ye mean—woman, hoss, b'ar an' all? Why, whar wur yur eyes, man?" and the old hunter gazed upon the new-comer with a glance of half-contempt and half-pity.

"You will best understand how so seemingly an impossible thing happened, by permitting me to relate all that has happened since we parted after the fight."

"Why, sartin, sartin! I hain't no cur'osity, not the least bit, but I shed like ter know how yur kem to miss sech a trail es thet party'd be apt to leave behind. Why, dang my ole moccasins ef I couldn't 'a' follered sech a 'un ter Gabriel's ranch."

Checking the laughter that he found impossible to resist on hearing the bear-tamer's forcible assertion, he whom we only know as the Avenger proceeded to relate the events that had so recently occurred, concluding with a vivid description of the conflict on the mountain, and the mysterious disappearance of the wild rider and her dumb companions.

"Yur say yur follered ther trail down ther mount'in, an' lost it at ther crick?" asked Old Grizzly, who was evidently much interested.

"Yes, and I do not think *any* one could have followed it further; in fact I do not think it went any further."

"Yur bet it did," said the bear-tamer, positively. "What bekim uv 'em ef it didn't, then? Yur didn't s'arch close, man, er ye'd 'a' found it leavin' ther crick above or below some-whar"

"Well, I have come to ask that you will assist me in again getting on the track of this mysterious person. I have the strongest reasons for wishing to meet her again, and I have thought that you would—"

"And so I will," interrupted Grizzly, "but you see, stranger, thet's a wuss business nor all the women, an' white hosses, an' b'ars in creation, thet's got to be attended to fust. I war jess startin' out when I hear Blinker tellin' thet a human war about."

"But can not that be attended to afterward? I tell you I have the strongest reasons for wishing to find this woman."

For an instant the old bear-tamer stood looking at the other in blank amazement.

"Faggots an' flints! Didn't I tell yur afore thet the boyee war missin'? Have yur forgot thet?" he exclaimed, almost savagely.

"Has he not yet returned?" asked the Avenger, in a tone of surprise.

"No, he hain't, nor he ain't likely to till I goes arter him. The boyee ar' in ther grup uv ther Blackfeet, an' he must be got out. Ar' yur willin' to help?" The question was put abruptly, it might be sternly, and the speaker gazed steadily into the other's eyes.

"Of course I am," was the ready reply.

"Thet war sed like a man. Guv us yur fist, stranger," said Grizzly. "Help me snake the boyee out, an' then I foller the trail uv thet white hoss to ther Rockies but what I'll find his rider."

The bear-tamer now proceeded to give an account of the Indian boy's visit, and his singular message from Silver Tongue.

"The time sot fur the meetin'," he continued,

"ar' when the moon gits above the tree-tops yander."

"You don't think it's a plan to betray us into the hands of the Blackfeet, do you?" asked the Avenger.

"I don't know; an' what's more, I don't keer a cuss, so long as thar's a chance to get the boyee cl'ar. But I don't b'lieve it ar'. The Injin lad wur powerful grateful fur bein' saved from the b'ar, an' yur know one uv 'em don't never forgit a thing like thet."

"Well, then, I am ready," was the prompt reply.

"An' so am I, jess as soon as I kin see arter these beauties a bit," said the bear-tamer, turning to the cave and disappearing within.

In a few moments he emerged, bearing in his arms a huge piece of buffalo-meat, which he at once divided and distributed among the several animals that were squatted around, eagerly watching his motions.

While so engaged, Old Grizzly kept up a running comment upon their various characteristics, explaining the history of this one, the remarkable intelligence of another, and so on until all had been fed save the mighty Sampson, who was patiently awaiting his turn, well knowing that the lion's share would be given him.

"Jes' look at my rosebud! Durn my ole moccasins if he ain't got more sense nor a muel," and the bear-tamer gave the bear a large piece of the meat with one hand while he caressed the enormous head with the other. "Healthy appetite, hain't he?" he continued, with a broad grin, as the bear bolted piece after piece with the utmost avidity. "I tell you, stranger, thet feedin' uv sech a fambly ain't no small job, an' it keeps me an' Fire Fangs hyer purty bizzzy, I tell you. Ef they holds out much longer, thar won't be no bufler left in these regions."

Thus talking and working at the same moment, Old Grizzly finally concluded the task and announced his readiness to depart.

"Hyar, Blinker!" he called, "I'm off again, an' 'tain't likely I'll be back much afore some time er other. You're to stay hyer an' mind yer don't eat Sampson. Do 'ee understan'?"

The dog manifested his intelligence by gravely walking off and assuming his position as guard near the entrance.

"Them's the ticket! I wouldn't give much fur the feller as comes in hyar while I'm off. His hide wouldn't hold a bundle uv sage-grass arter Blinker hed finished wi' him. Now, stranger, let's be off," and throwing his heavy rifle across his shoulder, the bear-tamer led the way to the country without.

CHAPTER X.

LEAPING ELK'S MESSAGE.

It was yet something more than one hour of the time appointed for the interview with Silver Tongue, at the rock by the "falling waters," but the two hunters pushed rapidly forward, knowing that a long *detour* was necessary to avoid the Indian village or any chance stragglers that might be prowling about its outskirts.

Both knew that the utmost caution and secrecy were imperative if they wished to reach the rendezvous. Especially was Old Grizzly anxious for an undisturbed meeting. He now felt certain that Alfred Badger was a captive in the Blackfoot village, and equally sure that the young girl had sent for him to impart tidings in regard to his boy's fate.

Striking off to the right, as soon as they were clear of the timber, the two men skirted the base of the mountain where the Wild Huntress had last been seen, thence along a ravine that passed around and to the rear of the Blackfoot village.

"This ar' bully kiver," whispered Old Grizzly, as they cautiously advanced, parting the heavy chaparral with their hands, and pausing now and then to peer around in the fast-gathering darkness. "Do you know edzackly whar ther rock ar' as the lad spoke uv?" asked Grizzly, as they halted on the edge of a clear space in the valley.

"Yes. I have been there often. Two hundred yards further on, the ravine bends off to the left, running along the edge of the village a little further on. At the curve we must leave the gully and enter the heavy timber on the level above. From there a walk of five minutes will bring us to where a small stream pours over a ledge, near which is an immense boulder thickly overgrown with plants and creeping vines. That is the spot called by the Indian 'Rock by the falling waters.'"

"How ar' it fur kiver? how ar' it fur kiver? that's the point," said the bear-tamer. "Could the imps lay a ambushment with sart'inty?"

"The forest is very dense about the place, and the undergrowth would conceal a hundred warriors from the keenest eye," was the answer.

"Wal, I don't think the lad means ter play us foul, but a man can't be too keerful when a red-skin ar' consarned," said Grizzly, taking down his rifle, and throwing it into the hollow of his left arm.

While thus conversing, the two adventurers reached the point where the ravine curved off toward the village, and here they ascended the sloping side and directly gained the upper level, when the forest, as the Avenger had said, offered the best possible cover to screen their movements.

In a few moments they stood within a dozen paces of the large rock, looking cautiously out into the little clearing by which it was surrounded.

The place was, as far as they could judge, deserted. A profound silence, broken only by the soft splash of the water as it fell over the ledge into the basin below, reigned over all.

Perhaps a quarter of an hour passed, when down through the leafy arches toward the east, a ray of soft yellow light fell upon the leaves at their feet.

"That's ther signal," said the bear-tamer, pointing through the opening to where the full moon shone, just above the crest of the hills. "And she'll—Thar! Injun-like, the gal comes to the minit!"

This abrupt exclamation, made in a low, cautious tone, was caused by the sound of stealthy footsteps approaching, and a moment later the form of the Indian boy, Leaping Elk, stepped out into the clearing, and stood fully revealed by the light of the moon.

The bear-tamer was on the point of emerging from cover, when a savage oath from his companion caused him to turn quickly about, just in time to catch the Avenger's arm in his iron gripe, as he was about to spring upon the boy, knife in hand.

The lad had caught the sound of the hostile exclamation, and stood with one foot forward, ready to bound away at the slightest sign of danger. Were he to do so, and alarm the village, all would be lost.

"What do you mean?" demanded Old Grizzly, in a stern tone, as his gripe settled still more firmly on the other's wrist.

"What do I mean?" was the fierce response. "I mean to have the heart's blood of that Indian! Loose your hold, old man, or—"

"Or what'll you do? Put up that knife, or I'll git mine out, an' then we'll see who ar' the best man."

"Loose your hold, I say! He is a Blackfoot, and that is enough. I have sworn to spare none of the hated tribe, and why should I except him?"

"Perairy men don't war on weemin an' children," was the determined reply. "Shame on you! See here, stranger, harm but a ha'r uv thet boyee's head, an' by ther livin' catamount, I'll t'ar you limb from limb. Now there!" and the bear-tamer threw off his hold with such force that the other staggered back, and instantly drew his knife.

They were both brave men. Neither feared the death they had faced a hundred times, and for an instant it seemed that a combat must take place.

But he whom we call the Avenger had been allowed a moment for consideration.

He saw that he was in the wrong. The Indian boy had come alone and unarmed to meet the bear-tamer, trusting his life in his hands, and he could but feel that the latter was right in defending him from harm. He would have done the same had the case been reversed.

Like all truly brave men, he was quick to acknowledge his fault when he himself had discovered it, and with a rapid motion he put back the blade and stepped forward with outstretched hand.

"I was wrong. You are right in protecting the boy, but if you could but even dream how bitter is the hatred I bear all his tribe, and how fearful has been the cause for that hatred, you would not wonder at my actions. Were I to shed the blood of every Blackfoot that lives, it would not wipe out the memory of the wrong they have done me and mine."

The man spoke with intense emotion, his voice became husky, and his broad chest rose and fell as he recalled those bitter remembrances.

The keen eye of the old bear-tamer read him like an open book; he saw the terrible earnestness with which he had entered upon, or rather continued his crusade against that barbarous

and cruel tribe, and he gave him due credit for yielding the present point.

"You ar' a man, dang my ole moccasins ef ye ain't," he exclaimed; "an' when I'm through this hyar bizziness I'm with you, boots an' toenail, by gum! Thar!" and he shook the extended hand heartily.

Thus was cemented a bond of friendship between these two strange characters that carried them together through many trying scenes.

"But come," said Grizzly; "the lad's a wait-in'. I must see what's made him kem 'stead uv the gal," and he stepped out of the bushes and advanced to where Leaping Elk stood.

The instant the boy's eyes fell upon the bear-tamer all his confidence returned, and with a gesture replete with gratitude, almost love, he took the hand of the hunter in his own and pressed it gently.

"Again has the Man of the Bears saved the life of Leaping Elk."

"Pshaw, boyee, 'tain't nothin'. My friend hyar got his back up, an' kem near makin' a mistake. But I reckon he's all right 'nough now. Whar's the gal?"

"Silver Tongue cannot leave the lodge of her father, Big Hand, the chief of the Blackfeet," said the boy.

"Can't kem, hey? Ole chief got his eye onto her? Wal, didn't she send no word?"

"She has sent her brother, Leaping Elk, to speak her words into the ear of the Man of the Bears."

"She did, eh? Well, youngster, drive ahead, an' ef you kin on'y give me sum good news uv my boyee, why—why, dang it, I'll do a'most ennything fur you, an' the gal, too, fur thet matter. Out with it. I'm waitin', don't you see? Not thet I've enny cur'osity, but I would like to hear from Alf."

"Pe-toh-pee-kiss is in the village of my people," said the Indian lad.

"Who ar' in the village?" asked Old Grizzly, with a broad stare of surprise.

"Pe-toh-pee-kiss, the Young Eagle, so has Iron Heel, my father, named the young white warrior. He is now my brother," said the lad, earnestly.

"The deuce he is! Oh! yes. I see! Certainly! On'y I don't see, by a durned sight. What do 'ee mean, boyee?" asked the bear-tamer, catching the young Indian by the shoulder and turning his face to the light of the moon.

"Iron Heel, my father, took the white warrior to his lodge. Ten moons ago Wun-nes-tou, my brother, went upon the war-path. He fell before the rifle of the white man. Iron Heel's heart was heavy. He took the young Eagle as his son."

"What! my boyee! Faggots an' flints! but I'll bu'st up thet leetle game! Oh, sartinly! He wants another son, do 'ee? Wal, you jess travel back an' say to Mr. Iron Heel, ef thet's his name, thet I'm the boyee's daddy, an' mammy, an' all his uncles an' aunts besides. Him turn Blackfoot! Why, durn my ole moccasins ef thet don't beat ennything thet these ole ears ever heard yit!" and the old bear-tamer stormed about though very quietly, like a raging grizzly.

"Let the Man of the Bears listen to the words of Leaping Elk," said the boy, calmly. "The Red Avenger," and here he turned and regarded the dreaded foe of his tribe sternly, "was already at the stake. The Woman of the Mountain came and tore him from the hands of the Blackfeet—"

"Wal, lad, what ar' thet got to do with the boyee?" asked Old Grizzly, impatiently.

"The Man of the Bears and the Young Eagle came, and when the warriors had almost taken him again, they killed many Blackfeet, and Warrama again escaped."

"Yes, yes; go on, boyee, go on," said Grizzly, who began to have an inkling of what was to come.

"Pe-toh-pee-kiss was captured by our braves, taken to the village to die in the place of the Red Avenger. He was going to the stake. Iron Heel, whose heart was heavy, claimed a warrior's right and took him for his son."

"He did, did he? Iron Heel did! Well, durn my cats ef he ain't a trump! But," he added, quickly, "'tain't fur keeps! Not by a durn sight."

"Young Eagle was taken from the council-house, and the braves sought his life. He was unarmed. Stu-mick-o-sucks fell before the Young Eagle's empty hand—"

"That's my boyee! that's my boyee!" exclaimed Old Grizzly, in a high state of excitement. "Go on, boyee; go on!"

"The tomahawk was in his belt, and Pe-toh-pee-kiss snatched it and slew two more Blackfoot warriors."

By this time the bear-tamer was wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement. In a moment he would have given vent to a startling whoop, had not the warning arm of the lad been raised in time.

"Knocked one squar' down, an' rubbed out two more! Game to ther back—"

"The Man of the Bears must listen to the words of Silver Tongue. She has sent me to tell him that the Young Eagle is in danger. The chiefs have sent him to the strong lodge—"

"God help the boy if he is there," interrupted the Avenger, speaking for the first time.

"Ther strong lodge!" exclaimed Old Grizzly.

"Why hev they sent him thar? What doose Iron Heel say, boyee?"

"Iron Heel is a great warrior, but the tribe are his enemies here," replied the lad.

"An' you say Silver Tongue ar' the chief's darter? Can't she help the boyee?" asked the old hunter.

"Silver Tongue loves Pe-toh-pee-kiss," was the significant reply.

"She do, do she? Wal, she shows her sense. The great chief, Big Hand, 's her daddy—her father, I means—yur says?"

"Silver Tongue was sent to the chief of the Blackfeet by the Great Manitou. She came from the Snow Mountains of the North."

"Sent to him!" exclaimed the hunter, and the two white men exchanged a significant glance.

"Who was her mother, lad?" asked the Avenger, eagerly.

The young Indian drew himself up haughtily, looked the speaker fiercely in the eye for an instant, and deliberately turned to the bear-tamer without replying to the question. It was plain that Leaping Elk shared the hatred felt by his tribe for this remarkable man.

"Yes, lad, who war her mother?—the mother uv Silver Tongue?"

"There is no squaw of the Blackfoot tribe that can call her daughter. Leaping Elk has said that the Great Spirit sent her to the chief from the Snow Mountains. She came on the wings of the North wind."

"Oh, ho! hyer's another consarned mystery. I hain't no cur'osity, not the least bit, but, dang my ole moccasins, ef I wouldn't like ter know who the gal's mammy wur," muttered Old Grizzly to himself.

"But come, come, we're jess wastin' time by all this hyer palaver," he continued. "Finish tellin' what the gal sent yur to say, an' then we'll see what kin be did."

"Silver Tongue told Leaping Elk to say to the Man of the Bears that the Young Eagle would die in three days if the Red Avenger was not made prisoner by the warriors before the time had passed," was the startling answer.

"Die! ther boyee die! What fur?" ejaculated the old hunter, terribly stricken by the news.

"The warriors that have gone on the long path must have the spirit of a white man to go before and clear the briers from the way. Such is the custom of my tribe," said the Indian, sadly.

"An' he ar' to suffer fur what this hyer man has did?" said old Grizzly, turning fiercely on the Avenger, who stood silently by.

"The young man was engaged in battle with the Indians, he slew several of their warriors in the valley, and two more in the village. That is why he is to suffer," said the man, hurriedly.

"Pe-toh-pee-kiss will be freed if he is caught," said the lad, addressing the bear-tamer, while his dark eyes burned like living coals of fire.

"Faggots an' flints! this ar' a pretty mess!" snapped the irate hunter. "He'll die in three days ef another can't be got, will he?"

"So the chiefs have said," returned the boy.

"But, if another is ketched, he'll do ter scorch es well, er better nor the lad. Ar' thet it?" asked the bear-tamer.

"The Man of the Bears speaks with a straight tongue," said the Indian.

"Then, by ther everlastin' catamounts, he sha'n't burn! Tell him, lad, to keep up a brave heart. Pshaw! he'll do thet ennyhow! Tell him his ole uncle ar' around, an' thet he'll move heaven an' airth but what he'll snake him out. Tell him so, lad, an' I'm y'ur friend for life."

"And what shall Leaping Elk say to Silver Tongue?" asked the boy.

"To the gal? Why, jess give her a ole hunter's thanks, an' say es how she may jess love the boyee harder nor a muel kin kick ef she wants ter. Ax her to do her best fur the Young Eagle, as yur calls him, an' mebbly all on us together 'll be able to help him out'n the defickilty. Can 'ee say all thet, lad?"

"The words of the Man of the Bears shall be whispered in the ears of Silver Tongue. She

will tell them to Pe-toh-pee-kiss," answered the boy, who, turning upon his heel to go, paused a moment, and said:

"The Man of the Bears must seek his home in the mountain. The warriors of the Blackfeet will be on the war-path when the moon is an hour older. Let him get to cover." And then, facing the Avenger, he addressed him for the first time that night.

"The braves go to find the trail of the enemy of their tribe. Let the Red Avenger beware. Leaping Elk can not betray him now, but, when their paths cross again, he will sound the war-whoop of his tribe."

As the boy ceased speaking, he leaped into the undergrowth, and was seen no more that night.

"The boyee is in the strong lodge," muttered Old Grizzly, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. "It ar' dangerous, an' must be looked to. But the gal—her as kim from the Snow Mount'ins, an' hain't got no mammy—thet gits me back wuss'n ever! Hyer's anuther one uv them consarned mysteries, an' a'though I hain't no cur'osity, I'm bound ter sift ther bizness to ther bottom, es the feller sez, an' further, too. Come, let's travel!" and a moment later the spot was again deserted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WILD HUNTRESS OF THE HILLS.

LEAVING the bear-tamer and his companion carefully threading their way back to the covert in the hills, after the departure of Leaping Elk, we must return to the spot upon the mountain where the combat with the panther had taken place.

It will be remembered that the mysterious woman, the Wild Huntress, as she was called, had disappeared *somewhere* within the rocks, having gone in search of a stimulant for the wounded man, and that, while absent, the patient had recovered, and left the place by means of the trail that led down the mountain's side.

It was perhaps ten minutes after her disappearance before the woman reappeared, and this she did with the same abruptness which had marked her previous action.

Without warning, or sound of any kind, she seemed to step right out of the rocky wall, and, with a quick motion, advanced to where she had left the wounded man lying beside the dead panther.

The brute was there, but the man was gone, leaving behind not the faintest clew as to which route he had taken!

With a frightened stare, the woman glanced around, instinctively falling back a few paces toward the unseen entrance, as though she feared a sudden attack, or, perhaps, a fatal shot by a hidden foe.

Her first and most natural conclusion was, that the Blackfeet had followed, discovered the wounded man, and borne him off to the village. If such was indeed the case, nothing was more probable than that one or more of the savages would remain in ambush near by with a view to discover her whereabouts.

As the woman stood, with one foot slightly advanced, in such position as would enable her to spring back at a moment's warning, her hands partially raised, her lips slightly parted in expectancy, and her wild, restless eyes roving over the surrounding scene; she presented a most striking and singular appearance.

She was rather above than below the medium height. Her form, well developed and rounded by constant exercise amid the bracing mountain breezes, was erect and graceful. Her face, which had once been eminently beautiful, was now cold and stern, with here and there lines that told of either great mental suffering or else more than ordinary physical hardship.

But, the most remarkable feature, and one that would attract instant attention, was the large, full gray eye, which, as we have intimated, was wild, and to a certain degree, unsettled or wandering in its gaze, occasionally lighting up with that peculiar *glare* we sometimes see in those who are possessed by incipient insanity, and again clouding over with the burden of a great sorrow.

Her dress, half-civilized, half-savage, consisting of a closely-fitting bodice of some dark-colored cloth, with a narrow skirt that barely reached her ankles. Upon her small, shapely feet were embroidered moccasins, while at her waist, suspended by a broad strap of buckskin gayly fringed, was the bullet-pouch, and powder-horn such as are used by the hunters of these regions. In a belt, also of buckskin, that

encircled her waist, was thrust the short, keen blade that had been wielded with such deadly effect in the panther fight. Upon her head was a light, bead-embroidered cap, from beneath which her dark hair flowed far down over her shoulders.

Such was the Wild Huntress of the hills, a mysterious personage, who, for a number of years, had been seen by the Indian tribes scouring across the great prairies, or breasting the mountain steeps upon her white steed, with the great brown bear lumbering by his side.

None knew whence she came or where she went. Her home was somewhere amid the fastnesses of the mountain chain, and no Indian warrior had ever been found brave or reckless enough to attempt to follow her trail.

Over the untutored and superstitious minds of the savages she wielded the most powerful influence, that arising from fear, and, as we have seen, it was only on the greatest provocation that they ever dared lift their hands against her.

Having thoroughly satisfied herself that the wounded man she had left but a few moments previous in an unconscious state, had disappeared, she turned about, and approaching the face of the cliff, passed round a small, projecting ledge, and entered a narrow crack or chasm that led back into the solid rock.

This passage she pursued for some little distance, perhaps thirty or forty feet, at the termination of which the chasm suddenly widened into a room of considerable extent. This, however, was merely the antechamber to another and still larger apartment beyond.

This second room was evidently the abiding-place of the huntress.

Scattered about were various articles of comfort, even luxury for these parts; a cot in one corner, upon which were spread a number of bear and buffalo skins; a rudeland upon which were lying a large book, a pair of scissors, and one or two other implements, and a light rifle standing against the wall, completed the furniture.

Off to the right, in a niche of considerable extent, in fact almost another room, stood the White Steed, readily saddled and bridled, while at his feet lay the brown bear, apparently in a profound slumber.

Muttering to herself the strange woman busied herself about the place, gathering together several articles, among which was a piece of dried venison. This she placed in a kind of haversack which she hung over her shoulders.

She was evidently preparing for a journey, and was on the point of leading the white horse out, when suddenly she changed her resolution, left the animal in his stall, and walking to the bed threw herself upon it, and was soon buried in sleep.

When she awakened the light that came in through a large opening beneath a shelving rock above, had given place to the gloom of twilight, which in turn was fast passing into the deeper darkness of night itself.

With an exclamation of surprise, or impatience at having overslept herself, the huntress sprang from the couch, and, hastily catching up her rifle, took the bridle of the white steed in hand and led him through the chasm into the open air. The brown bear closely followed; and, as she paused upon the platform without, he thrust his cold muzzle into her hand and uttered a low whine.

"Yes, Brownie. We are off for the lowlands again," she said, while gently stroking his huge head.

"It is very strange that the wounded hunter should have left so abruptly," she murmured, as she stood gazing off to the northward where the Indian village lay, her arm thrown over the white steed's neck in a caressing attitude. "How strange the resemblance in that still, pale face to one that I so loved in other years, and have mourned so long! I know it can not be he," she continued, wearily passing her hand across her brow, "but I felt my heart go out to this stranger, with an impulse I could not restrain. Is it possible that the Blackfeet could have discovered this place and carried him off while I was absent? Hardly; and yet, what can have become of him, for surely he was not able to go away of his own accord. But, I must away. He can not be far hence, and if his foot has touched these rocks, Brownie will soon find his trail."

She now spoke to the bear, and taking him to the spot where the wounded man had laid, she made him scent the rocks round about for several minutes.

The intelligent brute appeared to comprehend

her wishes, and after nosing about for a while, he suddenly moved slowly off on the trail that we have seen the Avenger descend.

"The bear has it!" exclaimed the huntress, as she rapidly mounted and rode after the brute, which was still progressing, muzzle to the earth.

Their progress was necessarily slow, not while traveling the downward path, but after striking the lower level, the trail was broken in several places by small streams of water that crossed it at right angles. In more than one of these the hunter seemed to have waded short distances, up or down their beds, and at each, the bear was forced to search the further bank until the scent was recovered.

While thus engaged the moon rose, and shed her soft rays over the broad bosom of the prairie.

The bear steadily pressed forward on the trail, losing it again and again, and as often recovering it with remarkably sagacity. In this way more than an hour was consumed after the moon rose, and the Wild Huntress found that she was approaching a belt of timber, which the reader will recognize as that which lay in front of the bear-tamer's camp. Upon the outer verge of the strip of forest, the dumb guide halted, raised himself upon his hind legs, and uttered a low growl.

Here we will leave them for a moment, and return to Old Grizzly and the Red Avenger from whom we parted as they were making their way from the interview with the Indian boy.

Without difficulty or danger of discovery, the two crossed the open country and at length halted beneath the shadow of a dense grove not far from Old Grizzly's home.

Here a long and earnest council of war was held.

The news that Alfred Badger was to suffer death at the expiration of three days unless a substitute could be found in whose tortures the rage of the Blackfeet would be satiated, moved the rugged nature of the old bear-tamer to the very bottom.

He entertained not the slightest idea of permitting the young man to die, not if he himself had to become the substitute, but he did not intend to resort to so desperate a measure until every other possible plan of release had been exhausted. In this determination he was heartily seconded by his companion, who, feeling that he was in some degree the cause of the young man's perilous situation, and further, having learned to admire the character of the bluff old bear-tamer, determined that he, too, would fight to the death for Alfred's release.

It was of this they talked, laying plans by which to be guided on the morrow when their measures were to be put into active operation.

"Whar now?" asked the bear-tamer, as his friend turned to depart. "Thar's plenty uv room in my ranch fur two on us, an' what's more, thar's a grist uv cow buffler thet can't be beat nohow."

"You see, I am without a rifle. I have one, and a good one, secreted not a great way off, and I must go to fetch it. I have also at the same *cache* a complete Blackfoot costume—"

"Bring it along! bring it along to a sartinty!" exclaimed Old Grizzly, eagerly. "T ur the best think yur could a-lit onto in a coon's age."

"Well, then, I must be off. Look for me about daylight, and have Blinker muzzled," said the man, turning away and striking off through the timber in a northerly direction.

For some moments the bear-tamer stood gazing after the retreating figure.

"Durn my ole moccasins ef he ain't a trump, ennykow, an' he'll help me a power in—hullo! what ther blazes ar' this hyar a-comin' now? Another one uv them 'er' myster'ous mysteries. Swamp me fur a Digger Injin if it ain't that 'ar gal as snaked ther feller outen the fire! She ar' a quare 'un an' no mistake, an' though I hain't no cur'osity, not the least bit in the world, yet, dang me, but I *would* like to know what she ar' cavortin' about ther kentry this time o' night fur. Faggots an' flints! hyar she comes straight, plum center fur whar I'm a-standin'. An' thar's that b'ar a-leadin' uv her! He ar' a beauty, an' I'd like ter add him to my colleckshun, es the feller sez, but I reckon she wouldn't. Yur don't say so?" he abruptly exclaimed, as the bear sighted him and raised on his hind feet after the manner of bears. "You be dod durned; a-puttin' on sech a'r's es thet. I've got a notion to—no—I hain't, fur hyar's the gal," and the old fellow, with instinctive gallantry, shook himself up in his buckskins and smoothed down as best he might the tangled masses of his long hair.

"Call off the b'ar, ga—miss, I means!" said Old Grizzly, as the Wild Huntress rode up close to where he stood. "I hain't afeard on 'em much, but you see the b'ar mout git hurt."

"Down, Brownie!" was the quick command, and the obedient animal was as docile as a lamb.

"He ar' a good 'un, ga—miss, I means; but Lordy! you oughter see *Sampson* in thar," and he pointed over his shoulder toward the camp.

"Yes, yes," interrupted the woman, impatiently. "I came not here to talk of bears. Who are you?"

The manner was abrupt, and voice singularly stern for a woman. It evidently took the old bear-tamer aback.

"Who ar' I? Wal, I dunno but what it'll take sum leetle time to satisfy your cur'osity on *thet* subject. I presume yur hev got y'ur share uv *thet*. Weemin mostly hev."

There was plainly a streak of humor in the gruff old trapper's composition. The strange woman's manner had riled him a little and brought it to the surface.

"I am searching for a hunter. He has no rifle; no weapons save his knife. His garments are rent, and he wears no covering on his head. Tell me, hunter, have you seen him?"

This change of tactics upon the part of the woman produced a corresponding change in the manner of the bear-tamer.

"Now y'u'r talkin'," he said. "Y'u'r lookin' fur *thet* feller, ar' yur?"

"I am," was the reply, a little impatiently.

"Yes, I see! Yur say he hain't no rifle?"

"Nothing but his knife. The Blackfeet have his rifle."

"Jess so. Now yur see I hain't no cur'osity, but I *would* like to know what yur want uv him," said Old Grizzly, with apparent earnestness.

"This is trifling!" exclaimed the woman, sharply. "Will you tell me plainly whether or not you have seen the hunter?"

"Wal, now, I jess hev. He war hyer not more'n awhile sence."

"Which way went he? Tell me, that I may follow!" exclaimed the Wild Huntress, eagerly.

"War the b'ar a-trailin' uv him?" asked Old Grizzly, pointing to the beast, and speaking deliberately.

"Yes. He led me hither."

"Waal, now, yur kin do better'n follerin' the stranger. He's gone off across the kentry to git a rifle an' fixin's as he left in *cache*, an' yur'll hev a hard tramp to ketch him. He ar' to return hyar in the mornin' an' ef yur likes yur kin jess wait fur him."

"Where shall I rest for the night?" she asked, glancing around.

"Ef yur ain't skeart uv b'ars, I hev inside a kind uv ranch as'll suit fust rate. I'm a-goin' to stand watch out hyar, enny how till mornin', fur I thinks the Blackfeet ar' out skirmidging arter him as they calls the Red Avenger. Yur kin hev the place all to y'urself."

"You are very kind," replied the Huntress. "I am weary, and will accept your offer. You say he will return in the morning?"

"Sartin, ga—miss, I means," said Old Grizzly. "We hev been on the scout to look arter a boyee ov mine, as the Blackfeet hev grupp'd, an' to-morrow we ar' to try it ag'in."

"Is he a captive in the Indian village?" asked the woman, eagerly.

"He ar' nothin' else, an' I'm durned sorry to hev to say it."

"How learned you this?" again questioned the woman.

In a few words the bear-tamer informed her of all that had passed at the rock by the Falling Waters, including the message sent by Silver Tongue, as well as what the Indian lad had said in regard to the daughter of Big Hand.

While relating this part of the interview, Old Grizzly observed that his singular visitor was intensely excited, frequently interrupting him with broken exclamations, and at one time by a series of hysterical sobs that shook her from head to foot.

"Brought from the Snow Mountains of the North!" she exclaimed, repeating the trapper's words, when he had finished; "it's not from the mountains of the north!" she sobbed, "but from her mother's bosom by the fiends, after they had ruthlessly murdered her father and all save one who were with him!" And then, without a moment's warning, or speaking a word as to her intentions, she suddenly gathered up the reins, gave the white steed a furious cut with the heavy switch she held, and was away like a flash through the dense timber, waving her hand above her head, as though in parting.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE IN A WIGWAM.

BIG HAND, the great chief of the Blackfeet of the North-west, was a ruler of Roman sternness and rigor. He governed with an iron hand, the signification of his name not being that of the physical size of that member, but of its figurative grasp and power.

Daring bravery, skill in the hunt and battle, and administrative ability are virtues which always command the respect of barbarians, and so it was that he held his power stronger than ever when the heat and snow of half a century had failed to bow his frame and subdue his lion spirit.

It was an unusual concession for him when he gave the Young Eagle three days' grace. His policy would have dictated the slaying of the captive, and the bending of every energy to the capture and execution of the Avenger also; but his respect and friendship for Iron Heel dictated the course adopted, and it was in reality a concession to the same qualities that so eminently distinguished himself.

The lodge of Big Hand was of great size, and furnished with all the gaudy profusion so characteristic of an Indian chief, many of the ornaments having been captured from wandering hunters and emigrants, and some of them were of the most valuable character.

The only inmate of the lodge besides himself was his adopted daughter, Silver Tongue, whose wonderful beauty and many fascinations had enchained the affections of many a young, and many a scarred warrior.

She had accompanied her father—so she considered him—on many of his expeditions, and had been seen by hunters and trappers, so that the name of Silver Tongue was frequently heard at the forts and stations in the West, and always with a certain respect and admiration, rarely awakened by the mention of an Indian maiden.

It was late at night when the chief returned to his lodge, the interior of whose largest apartment was illuminated by a blazing torch of pine. He strode into it, with something of the natural majesty of a forest king, and, pausing for a moment, looked about for his daughter, Silver Tongue.

He was not kept long in waiting, but, instead of bounding forth as was her wont to meet him, with ringing laughter and loving embrace, she walked forward slowly, and with a sad, down-cast face.

"Does a cloud rest on the light of my heart?" inquired the chief, in dismay.

"The sun shines no more for Silver Tongue; all is night to her."

The conversation of father and daughter was of this figurative character, and we shall, therefore, take the liberty of making a very liberal translation for our readers.

Enfolding the now weeping maiden in his muscular arms, Big Hand pressed her to him, and fondly kissing her forehead, asked the cause of all this grief.

"An adopted Blackfoot has been placed in the Strong Lodge, and his life is in danger."

The chief started; how had Silver Tongue learned of this? And why was she so anxious regarding him?

"He is placed there but for a short time," he replied, still hoping that she had not learned all.

"And then he is to be led forth to suffer death in place of one who is guilty."

"Who told you all this?" asked the amazed chief, who could scarcely understand how the tidings had reached her so soon. He did not know that the almost breathless Leaping Elk had lain in wait for his father, and then dashed with all speed to Silver Tongue, having left but a few minutes before.

Big Hand saw that his daughter had learned the truth, and, in her present anxiously-nervous state, the utmost he could hope to do was to quiet her fears; so he spoke in a cheery voice:

"That is until we can capture Warrama, and then we shall set him free again."

"Suppose you do not secure Warrama? Then Pe-toh-pee-kiss is to suffer in his stead."

"Oh! but we are going to catch the enemy of our race, and put him to the torture."

"But you had him once and he escaped; he may know enough to keep out of your power."

"He cannot; for the Blackfoot warriors will strive as they never strove before to secure him."

This was only begging the question, and Silver Tongue pressed her father to a direct answer, and he gave it:

"Failing to capture Warrama, then the Young Eagle takes his place; it has been so de-

creed in council, and Big Hand pronounces the decree just."

Silver Tongue sunk on her knees, and, giving way to her grief, prayed:

"Spare, oh, spare him! Do not let the innocent suffer—"

The chief lifted her to her feet, and spoke sternly:

"You forget that you are the daughter of a chief; I am grieved at your conduct, and I want no more to do with you, till you are yourself again."

And, although every nerve of his being yearned toward his beloved child, yet he turned and walked away, like the Roman parent, that he might teach her the lesson of justice before mercy.

Silver Tongue remained silent a minute after the departure of Big Hand, and then she roused herself, with something like the energy and stern will of her parent, from whom she had in reality learned not a little of her strong, heroic character.

"He loves me—he loves me, but he can never forget that he is chief of the Blackfeet."

She was hardly disappointed in the reception her red father had given her, but young, and ardently loving as she was, she was not yet prepared to despair.

"I must see him," she added to herself, and she sat in deep thought; "he is in the strong lodge, but they will not refuse admission to Silver Tongue, and maybe there is some way in which he can be released."

This was the thought that fired her now and infused such energy in her system. Until this day she knew nothing of the deep affection she now entertained for Young Eagle. She had seen and loved him from the first moment when, like a tiger at bay, he was wielding the tomahawk amid the crowd of enraged savages. It was simply a case of love at first sight.

"I love him," she added, blushing at the confession to herself, "and he has seen it. He has been but a short time here, but long enough for our eyes to meet and understand each other. I will go to him and see whether Leaping Elk and I cannot rescue him."

This was a characteristic determination of the young princess, and very naturally she acted it out at once.

She always moved without restraint, and now passed from the lodge without question, only glancing around to see that Big Hand was not watching her, and walked away through the village.

The "strong lodge" was a building that had been erected by the Blackfoot warriors for the express purpose of holding prisoners and desperate characters.

It well deserved its name, for it was made in the most substantial manner, with poles and stakes driven into the earth, and skins, bark and stones arranged in quite an artistic fashion. The arrangement of the interior was certainly unique and ingenious.

It consisted of five rooms or apartments, four of which were irregular in shape, while the fifth was circular, and was in the center of the others, communicating with each, so that it was impossible to reach this central apartment without passing through the others.

In this focus, as it were, of the vigilance of the Indians, their prisoner was placed until his fate was decreed, while in each of the surrounding rooms was a guard night and day.

Besides this the captive was bound during the night, his limbs being fastened at the ankles and elbows, so that, had a knife been placed in his hands, he would not have been able to help himself in the least.

During the daytime his limbs were untrammelled, and he was at liberty to move about; but from this it will be seen that he was placed under a most unremitting vigilance, and young and naturally sanguine, as was Alfred Badger, he had not a gleam of hope of escaping from the strong lodge without the consent of his captors.

It was in this lodge that the Avenger had been placed, and in which he used his utmost skill to leave, but without a particle of success; so that our readers will understand how dark were the prospects of the young captive, who had so many friends enlisted in his favor.

It was late at night when Silver Tongue reached the strong lodge and entered one of the doors. As she expected, she found a couple of Blackfoot sentinels seated upon the ground, but thoroughly wide awake.

They looked up with no little surprise as she entered, but they recognized her on the instant, and scarcely could have treated Big Hand himself with greater awe and respect.

One of the Indians was a distinguished war-

rior, and a worshiper of the beautiful maiden "from afar," and he sprung to his feet and waited to hear her commands.

"I have come to speak to Pe-toh-pee-kiss," said she, in a haughty, imperious manner.

The Indian felt that he was doing scarcely right in admitting her, and yet he could not refuse; so he silently pointed to the door of the central apartment, as a direction for her.

In each of the rooms a sickly, smoking torch was burning, dimly illuminating the interior, so that the maiden could see everything about her. With a rapidly throbbing heart Silver Tongue walked across the ground of the first "room," and timidly paused at the entrance of the prison of the one whom she loved with such a deep, yearning love.

Alfred had heard the words that had been spoken, as he lay upon his couch of skins, and he roused up to a sitting position, just as she appeared at the door.

His heart bounded as he saw her, for her wonderful beauty had awakened a responsive emotion in his breast, and during the lonely moments that he had spent in the strong lodge, he had thought not a little of the lovely creature he had seen in the square.

Like many of the Blackfeet, the maiden spoke the English tongue quite readily, her father having learned it many years before at the different trading-posts, and he took especial delight in teaching it to her.

The Indian is proverbially a stoical being, but not always so, as for instance, when associated together in their own families. We have seen that Silver Tongue, who had acquired all the habits of those among whom she had so long dwelt, gave way to her emotion when in the presence of her supposed father, the chief, Big Hand; but now, when her feelings were stirred to their profoundest depths, she stood calmly regarding the captive, evincing no undue excitement or sympathy.

"I have come," she said, approaching the prisoner's side, and speaking in a low tone, "to tell Pe-toh-pee-kiss that I am sorry that my father has placed him here."

"And I am deeply grateful for your kindness in coming," replied the young hunter. "I had begun to think that there was no friend to a captive like me in all the village, but I see that I was mistaken. Are you not the daughter of the great chief? him who holds my life in his hand?"

"I am," was the reply, and then, as though referring to the assertion of the captive that he had no friends, she said:

"Leaping Elk is your friend."

"Yes. A noble youth he is too," replied the young man, enthusiastically. "He has twice communicated with me, and I love him like a brother."

"Has the Young Eagle words that he would like to have spoken in the ears of his friend, the Man of the Bears?" asked the maiden, who was evidently becoming much embarrassed under the passionate gaze of the young hunter.

"When my ears are listening to the sweet sound of Silver Tongue's voice, I care not to think of aught else," responded Alfred, earnestly.

The girl blushed deeply, and her large, dark eyes lit up with a gleam of pleasure.

"But the Young Eagle is in danger," she replied. "The Man of the Bears is a great warrior, and he is the friend of Pe-toh-pee-kiss. He must be told."

"Is Silver Tongue sorry for the Young Eagle?" asked the hunter, again avoiding the subject of relief, and clinging to that nearest his heart.

"Silver Tongue has wept on her knees before her father that Pe-toh-pee-kiss might be spared," was the innocent answer.

"Then I care not what comes!" exclaimed the young man, enthusiastically. "The Young Eagle has looked into the dark eyes of Silver Tongue; he has heard the sweet words she has spoken, and now—" but the words were drowned in a tumult of sounds, that suddenly arose from without, indicating that something of an unusual nature had taken place.

With an exclamation of affright, Silver Tongue bounded toward the door, paused, looked around, and, as if obeying an impulse that could not be controlled, she stepped quickly back to the captive's side, stooped, and imprinting a light kiss upon his forehead, was gone like a flash of light.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEAR-TAMER'S "SHOW."

We have already given our readers an insight into the natural fortress where the old bear-tamer and

his family dwelt, but as regards the domestic arrangements thereof we have necessarily been silent.

The action of the story now requires that we should return to Old Grizzly, whom we left standing in the timber in front of his ranch, gazing, with a most comical look of surprise, after the retreating form of the Wild Huntress.

"Wal, now, by ther everlastin' catamount, ef thet don't git me! Stark, starin' mad, er I'm a digger Injun!" he exclaimed. "I jes' knowed thet big, snappin' eyes uv her'n warn't rollin' an' wallin' aroun' in thet manner fur nothin'." "No, siree! The gal's top heavy to a sartinty. Lookin' fur the Avenger, too! An' then thet 'er talk about the chief's darter bein' her child! Dang my old moccasins ef hyar ain't a pile uv mystery fur ye! But, the Injun gal ar' white, thar's no mistake uv thet. An' thet woman's head mout be level on thet subject ennyhow. But hyar I am foolin' around arter a crazy woman, while the b'ars ar' howlin' fur thar grub."

The latter assertion of the old trapper was strictly true, for, at the moment, a chorus of hungry growls and snarls arose from within, and without further loss of time, Old Grizzly turned upon his heel and entered the narrow passage that led to his castle.

When fairly within the area, the animals caught sight of their master, and a fearful increase in the din they were making was the result.

"Faggots an' flints, what ar' the matter wi' the brutes?" he exclaimed, pausing in the center of the place, and looking around at his various pets.

The bears seemed possessed of a spirit of mischief, or madness, and were acting in concert to produce as much noise as possible. Even the staid, solemn Sampson was lending the deep base of his voice to swell the concert.

That they could not be howling for food alone, Old Grizzly was satisfied. They had been fed a few hours previous, and always became more quiet on his appearance.

"Shet up, yur brutes!" he roared, grasping the heavy club, which he always used on the refractory members, and shaking the weapon threateningly.

"Why, enny body comin' in 'd think yur hedn't hed no teachin'! Do 'ee want to bring disgrace on him as ar' actin' y'ur father an' all the balance uv em?"

The club seemed to have great moral effect, for the beasts ceased their howling, and contented themselves with uttering, now and then, a low whine or grunt, that was as comical as the other had been disagreeable.

"Now yur talkin' er ruther yur ain't talkin'" said the bear-tamer, chuckling over his success in so readily quelling the storm. "Now thet yur've got back y'ur senses ag'in, I'll purceed to work," he muttered.

"Thar's much to be did afore the night's over, fur ev'ry minit the boyee lays in thet cussed strong lodge down yander brings him closer 'n' closer to the eend uv the third day."

"I ain't so sartin thet ef the wust kems to the wust, I won't rope thet 'er feller as calls hisself the Avenger, an' carry him down fur a fa'r, squar' swop. The boyee ar' jes' startin' in life, an' t'other 'un ar' more'n half done it, so the sarcumstances don't stand even nohow. 'Sides, 'twur his doin's thet fetched trouble onto me an' the lad." Here Old Grizzly paused and fell into a deep study, that lasted several minutes. "But no!" he said, straightening up. "Thet won't do, nohow! It sha'n't ever be sed as how Grizzly Adams wur a traitor to a cumrad', not even to save the boyee. I'm the one to scorch 'stead uv the boyee ef enny scorchin' ar' to be did, but, by ther everlastin' catamount, thar'll be a heap o' blood spilt an' ha'r lost afore ennybody ar' roped-up fur thet little amusement by the red niggers. Hooray! dang my ole moccasins ef I hain't got it! I've got a idee thet'll fetch things frum long law, I hev, by the 'tarnal, an' I'm jes' goin' to see how it 'll work. Ah's a me, Sampson, ole feller, when we two bekim acquainted 'twur a big thing, now I tell yur."

Apparently much excited by his "idee," the bear-tamer disappeared within the caravan, and presently emerged with another supply of the buffalo and deer's meat, which he divided as usual, and fed to the bears.

Each one in turn was loosed from the stake to which he was fastened, and led out to the center, and, to use Old Grizzly's own expression, was "put through a course uv sprouts."

"Come, Parson," he said, to a large Mexican bear of exceedingly grave demeanor, by reason of which the name had been given. "Come, up with yer an' show these other creeters what a reg'lar b'ar dance ar' like."

The obedient animal rose upon his hind feet, gravely crossed his paws over his shaggy chest, and began with a slow, stately step to keep time to a kind of tune whistled by the tamer.

It was a most comical picture, and Old Grizzly evinced his approval and delight by perfect yells of laughter, interspersed with remarks to the animal.

So, one by one he brought out his pets, black, brown, gray and red, all of them evincing more or less intelligence and aptitude in learning their various duties.

The old bear-tamer was even then meditating that remarkable tour throughout the country, which is so well remembered by all who had the good fortune to see him and his wonderful pets, and the work he was now engaged in was nothing more than he performed daily, with a view to perfecting the animals in their individual parts.

But he now had another object in view.

This working the bears after night, when they should have been allowed to sleep, was an exception

to the general rule, and the brutes seemed to be aware that he was trespassing. Some of them became ugly, and refused to perform, but the sight of the club soon restored them to reason.

It was observable that, in exercising the bears, he did so directly in front of where Sampson stood.

The latter was intently regarding the exhibition, and at times actually manifested his approval by sundry growls and grunts.

For more than an hour, perhaps two, the bear-tamer continued steadily at work, until, finally, all had been out save the "cock of the walk," as Grizzly was wont to term Sampson.

It now came his turn, and, after being fed an unusual quantity, he was led forth.

In preparing Sampson, the bear-tamer discarded the usual halter by which he managed the smaller fry, substituting in its stead a rude but strong bridle, made of raw buffalo hide, without a bit, in lieu of which he had made a loop, which passed over the nose and around the ears, thus holding it firmly in place. Ordinary reins, attached to the head-piece by means of iron rings, were to be used in guiding the huge animal.

"Now then, my rosebud o' beauty, jess rar' up, an' show these hyer loafers a b'ar as is a b'ar," said Grizzly, lightly lifting the brute's head by means of the bridle.

Up went the huge form, in obedience to the command.

"Bully for you!" exclaimed the bear-tamer, highly delighted with the evident good humor of his favorite. He was to try him yet further, and these were only preliminary preparations.

That the attempt, whatever it was, was to be something out of the ordinary channel, was evident from the careful manner and grave face of the old bear-tamer.

"It ar' the on'y chance," he muttered, as he led the great animal backward and forward across the arena, speaking kind words and bestowing caresses as he went.

But, the night was waning, and whatever was to be done must be done at once. Already had the other bears stretched themselves out for slumber, and Sampson himself had yawned once or twice in a frightful manner.

"I do wonder how he'll stand it," said Old Grizzly, as he busied himself about the head-gear.

The bear stood perfectly quiet, and apparently willing to submit to any treatment his master saw fit to impose.

"Wal, hyer goes, neck er nothin'; an' dang my eyes, ef I would be much astonished ef 'twur mostly neck."

Approaching the animal's side, the bear-tamer grasped the reins in his left hand, and, without giving the bear the slightest intimation of his intentions, vaulted on his back, and wound his free hand in the long hair to maintain his seat. The start and look of astonishment that Sampson gave was ludicrous in the extreme. At first he did not seem to fully realize what had been done, but he was not long in manifesting that he did not like it.

For an instant he stood motionless, and then, without attempting to bite or injure his rider in that way, he gave vent to an appalling howl, reared up on his hind feet, and started, full tilt, around the arena.

Leaping up and down, to the right and left, shaking himself violently, Sampson tore round the circle as if mad with pain or mischief.

The other bears did not offer the least obstruction to the monster in his wild career. He went over them as though they had not been there, sending them sprawling and yelling with terror, to the full length of their tethers, or else, catching in the chains that confined them to the stakes, they would be jerked from their feet, and thrown heels over head in the air.

All this time Old Grizzly was holding on for life. He had dropped the reins, finding it impossible to control his steed in the least, and had twisted both hands in the shaggy neck.

"Whoa! whoa! you durned brute! Hold on! cuss yer!" shouted Old Grizzly, as he tugged and pulled at the long hair.

But he might as well have spoken to a land-slide, and expected it to stop at the word of command.

By this time the other bears were raging with terror and pain, caused by the repeated trappings and jerks administered by the resistless Sampson in his passage.

Things began to look squally. Some of them were not fully under control of their master—having been recently caught—and these, especially, were making frantic efforts to break their chains.

Round and round went the grizzly, his great mouth wide open, and his blood-shot eyes glaring with excitement.

"Whoa, Samp—son! Hold—on! Whoa! Well, dang my—" but the sentence was cut short. The old fellow was completely exhausted, and was reeling about in his seat, uttering his commands, or rather entreaties, in broken sentences. He could not have held on much longer, and was seriously considering the propriety of letting go all hold and risking a tumble, when, without having in the least checked his progress, Sampson suddenly planted both fore feet out in front, and, quick as thought, came to a stand-still, at the same time throwing his head down, and "humming" his back.

The result was what might reasonably have been expected.

A stone hurled from a sling does not leave its place more suddenly, nor with more force, than did Old Grizzly his seat on the back of Sampson.

Straight out, head-foremost, he shot, for a distance not less than ten feet, unfortunately alighting square on top of one of his not thoroughly tamed pets, who,

doubly angered at this fresh assault, grappled his master, and together they rolled over and over on the ground.

The result might have been serious had not Blinker, who, from his position as sentinel, had gravely watched the whole affair, rushed to the rescue, and, seizing the bear by the throat, dragged him back, allowing Old Grizzly to rise to his feet.

The bear-tamer was considerably stunned by the fall, but not so much so as to prevent his realizing and enjoying the ludicrous position in which he had been placed. The old fellow burst into a roar of laughter that made the inclosure ring with the sounds.

Throwing himself down upon the sward, he rolled over and over, laughing until it seemed as though he must suffocate. Old Grizzly possessed a keen sense of the ludicrous, and his recent adventure struck him forcibly in that light.

"Wal, dang my ole moccasins, ef thet don't bang out enny ride es ever I took," he said, at length, sitting up and looking at Sampson, who had not moved from where he had stopped. "Talk about yer Comanch' ridin'! Waugh! Why, ther best hossman ain't a patchin'!" and again he gave way to merriment, until the bears once more joined in chorus.

"Shet up yer heads!" he called, savagely. "Do 'ee want ter hev half the Blackfoot imps in hyer? Shet up!" and he grasped the cudgel and shook it warningly.

"Es fer you, Samp," he said, walking up to the grizzly, "come, go home, like a good feller, an' go to bed. I think a leetle repose 'll do yer good."

Half an hour later, the bear-tamer's camp was profoundly quiet.

Old Grizzly himself, unable to sleep for anxiety in regard to Alfred Badger, was seated in front of his den, busily engaged in revolving his "idee."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE AVENGER IN A NET.

WITH that long, swinging stride peculiar to the Western hunter and mountain-man, the Avenger, after leaving the bear-tamer, struck out across the level prairie toward where he had secreted the rifle he so much needed, as well as to procure the Blackfoot dress as requested, so especially, by Old Grizzly.

The forest home of this white man was fully a hundred miles distant from this point, and was entirely different in character from the rural dwellings or cabins of the red-skins or hunters.

When he came into this country, it was with the deliberate purpose of working the utmost ill against the Blackfeet, and he made all his preparations and took all his precautions with the prudence of a man who knows the risk he runs.

On a small rocky island, in the center of a deep river, he erected a shelter, so skillfully screening it from view that no Indian, in gazing upon it from the shore, would suspect that it contained the home of a white man.

It being accessible only from the water, there was no trail left to betray it to any pursuer, and, when he stepped upon the island, he placed his feet upon hard flint rock, so that no tell-tale trace even was left here, to be seen by any canoe in passing up or down-stream.

Thus the only danger of discovery was in being seen in going to or coming from the island. To escape this risk Warrama made it a rule never to approach or leave the place during the daytime, and never to leave his canoe exposed to view, even at night-time.

By these precautions, the pursuing Blackfeet had never been able to "tree" the man whom they hated above all others. They had pursued him many a time, but when he reached the water and took to the canoe, he was irrecoverably gone.

From this remote retreat the Avenger sallied forth upon his destroying expeditions, striking secretly but certainly, and then darting back to cover again. Many and wonderful had been his escapes, but as we have not the space even to refer to them, we will follow in his footsteps only in the present instance so far as they are connected with the story in hand.

Warrama, as the Indians termed him, had made provisions for just such contingencies in which he was now placed. His cap and rifle were gone, and the distance was too great for him to make his way to his island home to procure others.

What, therefore, was to be done to supply himself with these indispensable articles?

He might have borrowed a weapon of Grizzly Adams, but he did not think it necessary, as there was a means of getting what he wished otherwise.

After leaving the bear-tamer, he struck off, as we have said, in a northerly direction, taking a course nearly parallel to the mountains, and that kept him at their base, where the scattered bushes and flinty soil afforded cover, and concealed his trail at the same time.

After an arduous tramp, he reached a place where there was absolutely no ground upon which to walk; the rocks and boulders being piled together so closely that it was the easiest matter in the world to spring from one to the other. Over these the man bounded like a mountain goat, until he abruptly halted before a broad, flat rock.

Standing motionless a moment, he looked hurriedly about him, to make sure that no one was watching his movements and then kneeling down upon one knee, he reached his arms far under the rock, and drew forth a pair of moccasins; then the leggings, hunting-shirt, robe—in fact, a complete outfit of a Blackfoot Indian.

Looking at them a moment, he muttered:

"They are genuine, because I took them from one of that tribe, who had no more need of them. I

kept them for future use, and it seems the time has come."

The next article produced was a hat, which, from its appearance and fit, he had probably worn years before, when in altogether a different latitude from this; the last object which he took in hand was a beautiful silver-mounted rifle, with its accompanying powder-horn and bullet-pouch. He turned it over, and contemplated it with a sigh.

"It's the first time I ever used you; I value you so much that the one that captures you must first take my life."

It was a handsome, costly piece, and on the stock were carved three letters: "J. J. H."

Fearing that the powder with which the piece had been loaded might have become damp and fail him at a critical moment, he proceeded to draw the ball and carefully reload.

Once more glancing around to satisfy himself that he was unobserved, he started on his return, still constantly looking about him in the suspicious manner of one who knows he is in great personal danger.

"The red-skins are abroad to-night, and I suppose a score are making a special hunt for me, but," he added, with an exultant shrug of the shoulders, "it isn't the first time I have had half the tribe searching for me; the next thing is for them to find what they are looking for."

So far as he could, while on the constant lookout, he employed his mind in thinking upon some method of assisting Old Grizzly to rescue Alfred Badger from the hands of the Blackfeet.

The Avenger was advancing in a careful manner, when his trained ear detected a rustling among the trees on his right. He had just passed beyond the rocky section to which we have referred, and turning his head, he found that some animal was approaching.

Holding his rifle for use at an instant's warning, he looked off in the direction of the sound, and the next moment, in the bright moonlight, he caught the glimpse of a bear, that seemed to be browsing upon the tender buds and leaves of a species of bushes that grew very luxuriantly in this neighborhood.

Only a part of his body was visible, but enough was exposed to tell where his head was, and the man raised his rifle and pointed at it; but, even while his finger was pressing the trigger, he lowered it again.

"What's the use?" he asked, impatiently at his own forgetfulness; "why do I wish to shoot that bear, when there is higher game?"

And turning away from the brute, he walked rapidly forward, as though anxious to make up the time he had lost.

But so trained a veteran was he in woodcraft, that, no matter how intense his thought upon some particular subject, he could not forget his caution; and so, while hurrying along, when he heard the faintest whistle, as if made by some bird high up a tree, he raised his head and halted as suddenly as if he had heard the singing of a bullet by his ears.

"It strikes me I have heard that same thing before," he muttered, "and if I ain't mistaken, I heard it in these woods no longer ago than yesterday."

If really a signal, it was so slight a one that it would have arrested the attention of none but the most suspicious scout.

Warrama stood a few minutes as motionless as a statue, with his head bent in the attitude of listening; but nothing more was heard, and he resumed his walk with a slower step than before.

"It may have been only a bird," he whispered to himself, "and it may have been something more, and I can't forget that the harpies are abroad to-night."

But as minute after minute passed without anything suspicious reaching his ears, he began to believe that there were no grounds of alarm, although he acted as though he thought the contrary.

Suddenly he paused under the shelter of a small bush.

"There!" he exclaimed, as something suddenly entered his head, "why didn't I think of it before? It's the only thing that can be done, and there's some chance, too."

He was evidently thinking upon some means of rescuing the young hunter, and a plan had suggested itself.

"It's very, very dangerous," he added, with a shake of his head, as he reflected more fully upon the scheme, "but it is the only thing, and it must be done."

Filled with this idea, he stepped off more briskly than before, and was reaching a part of the wood that was more open than that, through which he had just been traveling, when he heard the same faint whistle again.

"That means something—hello!"

A rustling in the bushes caught his ear, and, looking sharply ahead, he detected the same bear lumbering along through the wood.

"He looks like a black bear, but he isn't," he muttered, softly, and he took the rifle from his shoulder and drew back the hammer. Again the soft, bird-like whistle sounded upon the still night air. The bear had halted some little distance off, and seemed to be aiming to reach a certain position in front, and to the right of the white man.

"It's a risky shot," he again muttered, "and will bring the scouting savages upon me like a whirlwind. But it must be risked," and, with a quick, determined motion, he jerked the rifle to his shoulder, glanced through the sights, and lightly pressed the trigger.

The next moment the crack of the Avenger's rifle broke the stillness; and the dark, bear-like object at

which it was aimed uttered a frenzied shriek, very much like that of a human, and tumbled an inert mass to the ground.

"I would rather capture such grizzlies than those like Sampson," muttered the white man, as he sprung to cover and began hastily reloading his piece, looking furtively about him as he did so.

Warrama knew very well that he shot a Blackfoot, but he did not advance any nearer it for the purpose of making assurance doubly sure. The terrible school of experience in which he had learned his lesson had taught him the danger of such a course.

If there was one Indian there, it was more than probable that there were others hard by, for those who knew Warrama at all, knew him so well as to understand that it would be madness for one of their number to seek his capture alone.

And so, scarcely waiting until the charge was rammed home in his gun, the white man began retreating—stealing along in the cautious manner of a forest scout, who is picking his way through the labyrinth of peril, and who is prepared to see an Indian leap from behind every tree he approached.

Again he heard the same cautious whistle, coming from a point very close to where he had slain the pretended bear.

"They are at work," growled the scout, hurrying faster and skulking and dodging along. "I shouldn't wonder if there was quite a tempting reward offered for me by Big Hand."

The only, or rather the greatest, fear of the man, was that he had been driven into a sort of trap and was surrounded, so that on attempting to withdraw he would find himself confronted by some of his enemies, and a desperate, deadly fight would be the result.

"The next hundred yards will tell," he growled, as his eyes flashed from one point to the other, occasionally looking to the rear also.

As he hurried forward, he took advantage of what momentary protection he could secure from the intervening rocks and trees, which, however, were of really little use in fitting along as he did.

Warrama had accomplished most of the distance, when he discovered that he was approaching a large-spreading oak, with an immense trunk, and it struck him at once that if there were any red-skins in his immediate vicinity, they were intrenched behind this, and, naturally enough, he shied off to the left, with his keen eyes centered upon it.

And, looking with his lynx-eyed vigilance, he suddenly detected a gleam of light close beside the trunk, as though a moonbeam had struggled down through the leafy arch above, and been reflected upon some metallic surface.

Only for one second he stood thus; then, knowing that it was an Indian rifle pointed straight at him, he dropped instantaneously upon his face.

At the same instant there was a sharp red flash, and the bullet of the red-skin cut off a twig directly over his body. It had scarcely done so when Warrama was on his feet again, and running with full speed directly toward the tree from which the shot had come.

As he had drawn the fire of his foe, he had no purpose of giving him time to reload, and, with the old, burning hatred in his heart, he changed his rifle to his left hand, and grasped his knife in his right, ready and eager to settle up the business with that weapon.

Despite the tragical phase of the scene, there was something ludicrous in the shape it now took. The Blackfoot, who was certain he had the white man "just where he wanted him," suddenly found he had him just where he didn't want him. Fully aware of the eagerness of Big Hand to secure the man for the torture, this Indian had aimed not to kill him, but to wound him in such a manner as to render him helpless.

Considering it certain that he had accomplished his purpose, his consternation therefore was indescribable, when he saw him rushing across the intervening space, like an infuriated tiger, his gleaming knife grasped in one hand, and his terrible face speaking too plainly his intention.

The Indian suddenly concluded he wouldn't wait, and, turning on his heel, he bounded away like a startled antelope, his sole purpose being to keep beyond the reach of that dreaded being who had already slain so many of his kindred.

The sight of the fleeing Indian so exasperated the white man that, contrary to his usual custom, he resolved on overtaking the coward and compelling him to fight. This was extremely imprudent, when it was as good as certain that there were others near at hand, but in his frenzy, he cared not for this, and dashed ahead like a man beside himself.

The race bid fair to become an extended one, but he could see that he was gaining, and he pressed forward with desperation. Only a short distance did the race continue, when the alarmed Indian, looking over his shoulder, and seeing his danger, gave utterance to a peculiar whoop.

Warrama recognized it on the instant as a signal for help, and, knowing that he was running into an ambush, he suddenly halted.

As he did so the signal of the fugitive was answered, from a point so near at hand, that the white man in turn became a fugitive, muttering as he dashed away:

"Ambushed again as sure as fate!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRAPPER FRIEND.

THERE could be no doubt but that the Blackfeet were using every effort to capture Warrama, the Avenger, and he was now very nearly caught in the outer grasp of an elaborate plan looking to that end.

From here, there, seemingly everywhere, came the sharp signal whoops of the Blackfeet who were centering all their efforts upon the single fleeing white man. The latter ran like a bloodhound; and, as the red-skins witnessed the speed with which the fugitive ran, their rifles began cracking here and there, and the bullets literally "whistled" about the ears of Bender, who did not relax his extraordinary efforts in the least.

He was descending an unusually craggy place when he dropped almost upon the shoulders of a man of large, heavy frame, who was attired in the garb of a hunter, and who was engaged in smoking his pipe and half dozing upon a broad rock where the sun had full play upon him.

"Hullo! what's up?" he demanded, catching up his rifle and springing to his feet.

"Blackfeet!" was the significant reply of Warrama; "have you got any place where a feller can hide?"

"Dodge right into that hole!"

The trapper explained what he meant, by plunging like a frog into a dark circular hole about three feet in diameter, and the fugitive, without a moment's hesitation, did the same.

"Now give us a boost yer," added his newly found friend, applying his ponderous shoulder to an immense boulder, "and we'll soon shet out the rapscalli'ns."

A tremendous heave together, and the boulder tipped into position, and the two men were shut in, just as a series of whoops and yells reached their ears.

"Let 'em howl!" muttered the trapper, "and see what good it does 'em; they hain't got in yer yet, and I reckon it'll be ten or fifteen minutes afore they does."

"This is a regular fort," remarked Warrama, looking about the cavern and endeavoring to pierce the gloom.

"I've been chased in here afore, but thar ain't ary rapscalli'n followed me very fur—not much, I reckon."

"Have you never been troubled by the Indians, while making this your head-quarters?"

"Oh! yes; 'xpect it reg'lar every season."

"How is it you beat them off?"

"Wal, they git tired; I keel that ar' stone over, an' afore they kin git in, they've got to roll that away, an' afore they kin roll that away, they've got to dodge about a hundred bullets from my gun, an' I haven't found the rapscalli'n that kin do that quite."

"You are prepared then?"

"Allers; I keep 'nough fodder in yer to last me a month or two, an' then you hear the water drop, drop, drop, all the time; so, what more do yer want?"

"Have you food now?"

"Plenty of it; I'd just as lief spend a week in yer as not, fur thar ain't no danger of gettin' hurt, an' you're sure to have a good chance to pick off plenty of the rapscalli'ns."

The Avenger was about to remark that he would be glad to keep him company for such a time, when he recollected the work before him.

"Had I the time, I would be glad to stay with you; but I must get out of here before to-morrow morning at least."

"P'raps yer can't."

"But I must, and I *shall*," was the determined reply. "If they don't make the attack right speedily, I shall go out alone."

"No you won't fur thar come the cut-throats now, so keep yer eye skinned and let's reconnoiter."

Both men crept closer to the mouth of the cavern and listened to the shouts, yells and reports of the guns, as the leaden messengers flattened themselves against the boulder that blocked up the entrance.

"If they know who we are, I think they will make a long siege of it," remarked Warrama.

"Yas—I s'pose they'll be powerful glad to git you," replied the trapper, with a grin, as he looked significantly at him.

"Do you know who I am?" asked the latter, in amazement.

"I rather guess so; sometimes you call yourself Bender, but your name ain't any more Bender nor mine is, and mine is Nick Stringham. Then you're in the sculpin' business on the wholesale, and call yourself the Red Avenger, and the rapscalli'ns call you Warrama, which means 'bout the same thing—but what's the use? I know you, and I knowed yer brother, years ago."

"What! did you know him?" demanded the hunter, pale with excitement. "Where did you meet him?"

"In St. Louey. I war with him *that* time, and kin tell you all about it, 'cause I see'd it—"

A treacherous Blackfoot had crept forward like the stealthy panther, until he caught the outlines of a man so engaged in conversation as to forget his personal danger for the moment; and, taking dead aim at him, pulled the trigger.

Poor Nick Stringham made no outcry; but, as the sharp crack of the rifle rung through the cavern, he sunk down to the ground, with a sigh and a groan, and was dead!

For one moment the Avenger stood transfixed; for, accustomed as he was to scenes of violence, there was something in the sight of the trapper, stricken down before his face, so suddenly as to break the sentence he was uttering, and to leave it unfinished, that awed him. Then, conscious that he himself was in peril, he sprang back into the gloom, out of range, while he watched for the treacherous assassin.

"I'll wait till dark," he muttered, as he stood sullen and watchful in the gloom of the cavern,

"and then I'm going out of this infernal place, either alive or dead."

Only a few shots were fired during the afternoon, and the wily red-skins kept their precious bodies safely out of range of the rifle of the hunter.

Darkness was just beginning to settle over the mountain, when the trained ear of the Avenger told him that the red-skins were at work at something in front of him. Creeping stealthily forward, he soon discovered that they were piling brush up in the mouth of his hiding-place.

"Going to burn me out," he muttered; very well, go ahead!"

He waited until the whole front was darkened with the thickly-piled brush, and then, as he detected several shadowy figures moving cautiously about, he blazed away and popped one of them over, darting back so as to escape the return fire.

A yell told the result of the shot, and the next moment a bright glowing spot in the brush showed that some dusky hand had plied the torch. The light rapidly increased in size, and presently the smoke began drifting backward into the cavern.

The Avenger exerted all his strength and pulled the boulder away from the entrance. Then he fastened the rifle to his back, and picking up the form of the dead trapper threw it over his shoulder so as to balance it.

By this time the brushwood was fairly under way, and the front looked like a glowing furnace. Pausing but a moment to gather his strength, the Avenger gave utterance to a defiant yell, and then dashed out like a terrified wild animal, bearing the form of his comrade upon his shoulders. Straight through the fire he plunged, amid a storm of bullets; and, as soon as he reached the protecting gloom of the night he dropped his strange shield, and was gone like the whirlwind.

CHAPTER XVI.

SAMPSON'S EXPLOITS.

It will be remembered that at the critical moment Alfred Badger and Silver Tongue had been rudely interrupted by a commotion without the strong lodge, and that the maiden, after impulsively imprinting a kiss upon her lover's forehead, had turned and fled from sight.

Left to himself, the prisoner fell to musing upon the extraordinary turn affairs had taken.

Menaced as he was by an awful death, he still allowed his thoughts to wander to the beautiful girl who had just left him.

"She loves me—she loves me," he murmured, as a new delight thrilled his being, "and I believe I love her, too; for never have I been so impressed by a female as by her. Indeed I never knew what love was until this moment."

Dreadful as were his surroundings, he indulged in those blissful dreams which characterize the dawn of the all-potent passion, and forgot for the time the dark, portentous cloud that hung over his life, and which was so fearfully near.

"She loves me—she loves me," he added to himself, as he sunk off into a sweet dream, in which the same enrapturing figure floated before him.

When he opened his eyes again the day was far advanced, and an Indian entered to remove the thongs by which he was bound, and to give him food to eat. This done, he was left alone again.

Ere long Iron Heel looked furtively in the door upon him, but vanished again without uttering a syllable. Several hours later Leaping Elk gained admittance, although not without considerable difficulty.

The Indian youth showed his love in his looks, words, and in every gesture and movement he made, and Young Eagle, touched by his devotion, reciprocated the demonstrations, much to the delight of Leaping Elk, who said that he had seen Old Grizzly but a short time before, and that he bore a message from him.

The interview was of the most pleasing character, and, although Leaping Elk could make no definite promise, he departed with the admonition to Alfred to be prepared during the day or coming night for an attempt at rescue in some shape or other.

Only one thought gave him pain. Where was Silver Tongue? Why had she not paid him another visit? His heart had been beating fast, for several hours, under the belief that she would appear before him again.

"She may have been prevented," he added, with a sigh. "Big Hand may suspect the truth, or, perhaps, she has joined the mourners."

Attempting to console himself in this manner, he saw the day wane, and the darkness of night close over the village. Then a strange, heavy, sweeping tread was heard without the room.

It was approaching, too, and the alarmed Indian guard turned his gaze to see what it meant. As he did so, he uttered a howl of terror, and dashed headlong out of the opposite door.

Alfred Badger looked up. His eyes encountered a sight that drove the blood in torrents back upon his heart.

What did he see?

We'll pause to relate an episode which explains what Alfred now witnessed.

"Whoa, thar! confound you! step up lively, or I'll skulp yer!"

It was Old Grizzly Adams who thus addressed the colossal Sampson, whom he was again putting through a course of "sprouts." Detaching him from the group, in the grove of trees, he had led him a short distance away into a sort of natural clearing, where he began, or rather continued the lessons he had begun some time before.

It was about noon on the day succeeding the rescue of the Avenger, and the only auditor the bear-tamer

had was his dog Blinker, who, sitting to one side upon his haunches, looked composedly on, as if the bear-tamer was acting under his instructions.

Had an ordinary person stood by and watched Old Grizzly Adams, while maneuvering with this giant of the woods, he would have seen nothing more than mere pointless play, indulged in for no other purpose than the amusement of the bear-tamer.

And yet it was far more than that, for the old man was teaching him—and doing it, too, with remarkable success. Precisely how it was done, none of us could tell, and yet, with each passing moment, his Rarey-like power over the brute was increased.

At the end of an hour, Sampson would follow his master in any direction, sit or lie down, and permit almost any liberty with him. He seemed to regard his conqueror with real affection, and to feel a pleasure in anticipating his wishes.

Old Grizzly had ridden upon the back of Sampson, but it was done while the brute was under a spell of terror, and the animal manifested a curious repugnance against any one sitting upon his whale-like back.

"Yer've got to come to it!" exclaimed Old Adams, somewhat petulantly. "Yer've got to carry me on yer back, and anybody else that wants to. Come, now, that's a good feller."

Old Grizzly had a peculiarly-made saddle, intended expressly to be used in riding Sampson, but he concluded that he would not put him under this at present. Those who saw the bear-tamer in after years, will remember that he took great pride in displaying it to the admiring thousands who came to see the monster himself.

The shaggy hair of the brute afforded a ready means for grasping and holding one's self securely upon the great back of the animal, and so, slinging his rifle over his shoulder, where it was securely fastened, Old Grizzly clinched the hair of his pet and started him off, with the dog Blinker trotting at his side.

"Now, go it, Hummin' Bird!" he called out, as he settled in position; "I feel as though we war goin' to fetch up *somewhar*!"

And away went Sampson and his rider.

Well might the captive youth shrink in terror from the figure that appeared at the entrance to the room in which he had been held a prisoner since the preceding day; for, as he looked up, he saw in the dim, uncertain light, that proceeded from the torches, the outlines of a bear of gigantic size, with his huge snout thrust into the opening, as if making a momentary survey before proceeding to exterminate all the occupants of the lodge.

It was Sampson, the monarch of the woods.

Before Alfred could recover from his excessive fear, he heard a well-known voice, somewhere from the rear of the animal, and instantly after the rugged, honest countenance of Old Grizzly was framed in the doorway.

The bear-tamer had on his "battle look," as his young friend was wont to call it. His eye was flashing with the excitement and danger of the moment, and his brawny form seemed to actually swell and grow in size at the prospect of the coming fight.

There was no time for questions or explanations. Every moment was precious, and the young hunter needed not to be so told.

"Hyer, lad, hyer's y'ur weepin'," he said, hastily thrusting the six shooter into Alfred's hand. "Ther lad, Leapin' Elk, snaked it fer yer, an' now you've got to use it, er I'm mistook. Come, let's out uv this, an' see what Sampson, hyer, 'll do in ther way uv totin' us both."

Outside a fearful scene met their eyes.

From every section of the village the warriors were pouring toward the common center, the strong lodge.

To hearts less stout and courage less true than that possessed by our two friends, the situation would have appeared hopeless. But, such men never despair, and when the worst comes, they die fighting just as hard as if sure of victory or success.

The rifle of the bear-tamer spoke as he emerged from the lodge, and a daring brave fell, shot through the heart.

Instantly after, the sharp crack of Alfred's revolver was heard, and then the voice of Old Grizzly, speaking to his bear:

"At 'em, Sampson! Charge the imps, an' cl'ar the way!" he yelled, as he clubbed his heavy rifle, a favorite mode with him, well seconded by his brave companion.

With open mouth, displaying the terrible white fangs with which it was lined, and giving vent to one of his savage growls Sampson rushed headlong at the thickest part of the semicircle of warriors by which they were surrounded.

None knew the terrible nature of the beast with which they had to contend better than these Blackfeet braves, and as he came toward them, truly "raging Sampson," they broke and fled on either side with yells of terror.

Then the great brute turned and trotted back to where Old Grizzly stood.

"Mount, boyee!" he exclaimed, hastily, as the savages again bounded forward, seeming to divine their plan. "Mount, an' I'll git up behind. Up wi' ye! He'll stand it."

Without further hesitation, Alfred sprang upon Sampson's back, being instantly followed by Old Grizzly.

The bear seemed to have taken to carrying burdens wonderfully since we saw the first effort of his master to break him in.

Throwing up his head, with a loud, defiant snort, he headed for the timber, and was off with the resistless force and speed of an avalanche.

It would be impossible to depict the rage of the Blackfoot warriors, when they saw their captive so securely riding away to liberty.

Big Hand himself had arrived on the ground, and now, heading a party of picked warriors, he led them in rapid pursuit.

Sampson and his riders had disappeared in the timber, and were ascending the slight hillside, by the time the leading braves had gained the forest and scattered in eager pursuit.

Upon the crest of the rise, Sampson, at a command from his master, halted, and the two dismounted.

"They hain't got enuff, hain't they?" growled Old Grizzly. "Wal, they shan't complain. Away with yer, boyee. Make fer the ranch. I'll—"

"I shall not go and leave you here," said Alfred, decidedly.

"Ther deuce! Why won't yer? But, howsumd-ever, we'll go together, arter I've sot Samp at 'em onc't more. Hyer they come, sneakin' through the chaparral. Now then, my rosebud, at 'em onc't more, an' then trot fer home an' buffer!"

As the bear made his charge down the hill on the advancing warriors, Old Grizzly and the young hunter sprung away into the darkness, and keeping along the southern edge of the ravine in which the latter had been captured, they bent their course for the bear-tamer's camp.

In less than an hour after escaping from the village, the two hunters drew near the edge of the timber in front of the camp. As they approached, a dark figure stepped out into the open space from beneath the trees.

"Thar he ar' now," said Old Grizzly, "our kumrid in the scimmage."

The next moment the young man's hand was grasped, and shaken heartily, by the Avenger, who said:

"I cannot tell you how happy I am that you have escaped. You were to have been made to suffer for deeds that I have done. I was willing, I think, to take any risk looking to your rescue, but your brave old friend, here, has taken all the honor to himself."

"Not by a durned sight I hain't," exclaimed the bear-tamer, who had no idea of letting his "daffodil" be robbed of his glory. "Not by a dod durn sight. Whar war Sampson, I'd like to know, an' what 'd l'a' did without the b'ar?"

"True, uncle Grizzly," said Alfred with a light laugh; "Sampson is a—but, look! we are discovered! There is an Indian!"

Instantly two rifles were thrown forward, but, before either was raised, the voice of Old Grizzly was heard exclaiming:

"Hold on, man! Don't shoot, for the Lord's sake! Don't 'ee see who it ar'?"

And as he ceased speaking, the Indian youth, Leaping Elk, bounded forward in eager haste, and clasped the hand of his white brother.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"WAL, we're all together ag'in—thet ar', all 'cept my daffodil, Sampson, an' he'll turn up soon, yer may depend. An' thet ar' quare critter as goes cavortin' about the kentry on her white-hoss—lookin' arter you, Mister Avenger—an' the b'ar lumberin' arter. Now, yer all knows, I hain't no cur'osity, nor never had none, but, darn my cats, or b'ars either, ef I jest wouldn't like to know who she ar' an' whar she kem from."

"Perhaps you may learn sooner than you think for," replied the man whom we know as the Avenger. "I must find her again before I leave this place. It is strange that she should be hunting so eagerly for me, while I am doing the same in regard to her."

"Well, es I tole yur," said the old bear-tamer, "she seemed monstrous anxious to find ye, an' I'll bet my hull kit uv b'ars ag'in' a litter uv perrairy dorgs that she'll turn up clost about hyer afore long."

"But is her presence necessary to our rescue of Silver Tongue from the Indian village? From what I have learned, both from uncle Grizzly and my Indian brother here, I am led to believe—in fact to know—that she is white, that she has not a drop of Indian blood in her veins, and her place, therefore, is with those of her own race."

"Hullo, Blinker! What's up, now?" exclaimed the bear-tamer, as the deep bay of the bull-dog suddenly interrupted the conversation.

"Hark!" he continued. "I hear hoof-strokes on ther dornicks. I wonder ef the Blackfeet ar' arter us."

Hastily catching up his rifle, and followed by the others, Old Grizzly advanced through the narrow passway, emerging therefrom just in time to meet the Wild Huntress, who was riding directly toward where he stood.

"Burn me fur a digger Injun!" he exclaimed, "ef hyur ain't the very critter as we wur a-talkin' about."

"Have you seen him?" was the abrupt question, as the singular woman reined in her horse and prepared to dismount.

"Ef yur means him as ar' called the Avenger, I hev seen him. Thar he ar'!" and the bear-tamer pointed to the group that had halted a few paces behind.

How came the strange creature there, and without Brownie, her protector?

A few words will suffice to explain.

She had, in her restless wanderings, run into the nest of savages who were on the trail of the Avenger, and with her usual recklessness, had dashed forward to the pursuit, with some vague idea of a rescue of the man whose image so haunted her mind as to effect her strangely. The act was a rash one, for the savages, closing round her, easily "corraled" the white horse, and the brown bear. Brownie burst forth in one wild bound at the Blackfoot who approached to seize the horse's reins, and in the *melee* which followed, the faithful beast was literally hacked to pieces.

While this terrible struggle was going on, the Wild Huntress was not standing restfully by. With one fierce yell, she had pressed her horse forward, riding down the savages who confronted her, and as the Indians closed in upon Brownie, the horse and rider sped away unharmed; and heading for the camp, she had come in upon the group there, in the manner indicated.

With a quick motion, the Wild Huntress leaped to the ground, hesitated a moment, making that peculiar gesture of passing her hand across her brow as if in pain, advanced a pace or two, and then came to a stand, gazing with a bewildered, half-frightened stare at the unknown, who stood with Alfred and Leaping Elk by his side.

A sudden and startling exclamation from the Avenger abruptly broke the profound silence, and he slightly advanced, slowly and hesitatingly, as the woman had done.

"Merciful Heaven! Can it be?" he said, while his sunburned, bearded face worked under the influence of a powerful emotion.

At the sound of the hunter's voice the woman started violently, and her hand went to her brow as though she would clear away the mists that enshrouded her senses.

"Rosa!" said the Avenger, advancing yet another step.

"Who calls?" exclaimed the Wild Huntress, quickly, while her pale face suddenly flushed crimson, and then again became even more colorless than before.

"She recognizes the name! It must be her!" said the man, in a voice husky with emotion.

"Rosa, Rosa! don't you know me—Richard Hammond?"

"No—no—no," she whispered, looking wildly at him, but drawing back, as if terrified; "it can not be."

"Yes—it is—I am he—I am Richard; look at me; my beard has grown since you last saw me; but look, look!"

And he bowed his forehead and thrust his face close to hers, scanning her countenance as she scrutinized his.

"Time has made great changes, but I can see the face of Rosa there. It is not so strange that you did not recognize me, but it is unaccountable that I failed to know you."

"You look like Jason," she added, still intently surveying him, and speaking to herself; "yes, it must be—it must be!"

"Of course it is," he added, placing one arm about her neck, and tenderly kissing her cheek; "for years we have been so near each other without once dreaming of our relationship. Let us sit down and talk over the sad, sad past."

And in that conversation the terrible experiences of years were told. The Wild Huntress had been made so by the awful events of a day among the Black Hills, where her husband's train, overland bound, had paused for rest. Mounted on her white horse, she rode forward to view, from a height, the magnificent country, and returned to behold the whole train massacred, the wagons burned, dead bodies lying all around, and child gone.

The horrors of that scene—the terror, grief and despair of her situation, shook her reason, and then followed an existence which it were hard to describe. She would not leave the vicinity, apparently impressed with an idea that her husband and her child were still there. Finding in the hills a secure retreat, with singular method she made her arrangements to tarry there, and making of a brown bear cub a companion, she soon had in it a companion and protector.

But how came the Avenger there? He was the brother of the murdered husband. The horrible massacre was related to him by a troop of emigrants who came over the same route only two days after its perpetration, and took from the body of the husband various articles of value which Richard Hammond recognized. The knowledge filled him with an uncontrollable desire for vengeance. His brother Jason he had very tenderly loved, and the horrible murder left him in a state of mind hardly to be described. Where were the wife and child? he asked. Their bodies were not among the slain, and he concluded that both were then prisoners among the Blackfeet. To solve the mystery of their existence, and to satisfy his fierce rage for vengeance on the murderers, he at once made his way back to the country of the Blackfeet and became their terror, passing through the adventures and dangers already narrated—never for a moment dreaming of the identity of the Wild Huntress, but having a faint hope or suspicion, after his short captivity and his rescue, that the girl, Silver Tongue, was the missing child or the lost train. From this event, up to the moment when they now met in Old Grizzly's camp, their history is known to the reader.

As the party turned to enter the passage through the rock, a crashing sound was heard some distance off in the timber, and immediately Sampson lumbered up, and, without halting, shot by and disappeared within the rock.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MOTHER STILL.

THAT night and following morning passed quietly away.

No one of the little party stirred outside the bear-tamer's quarters, as the Blackfeet were abroad searching for the captive that had been torn from them.

Leaping Elk, charged with a message from Alfred to Silver Tongue, had departed just before day-break for the Indian village; and now, when the sun had just passed the meridian, we find the bear-tamer, Hammond—otherwise the Red Avenger—and Alfred Badger engaged in conversation, in front of the former's cave. The Wild Huntress sat a little way off, buried in profound thought.

"What wur the word ye sent the gal, boyee?" asked the bear-tamer.

"I requested her to meet me at the rock by the falling waters," replied the young man.

"Will she do it, think 'ee?"

"Leaping Elk says that she will be there at the rising of the moon; and I think he is not mistaken," answered Alfred.

During the last hours of daylight the impatience of Alfred Badger had with difficulty been kept in bounds; and when, at last, Old Grizzly gave the word to move, he bounded to his feet with an exclamation of joy that brought a broad grin on the face of his old friend.

"He ar' hurt bad, thar's no mistake about it," he muttered, as he busied about his weapons.

The bears were all seen to, as was the white horse, who had been brought inside; the dog was placed, as usual, on watch at the entrance, and then the little party started out on their perilous enterprise.

"Stiddy now," whispered Old Grizzly, as they arrived at the point where the ravine curved. "Stand hyer, an' let me an' the boyee see what's ahead," and, cautiously ascending the right-hand slope, the two were soon lost sight of.

Perhaps a quarter of an hour passed, during which time the moon rose, when a stealthy footstep descended, and the bear-tamer, alone, came up.

"It ar' all right," he said, in the same cautious tone. "The gal ar' thar. Her an' the boyee ar' palarverin' away. Leaping Elk ar' on watch to'ard the village, an' I reckon things ar' about squar'. Come ahead."

Hammond, so we henceforth call the Avenger, leading the Wild Huntress by the hand, closely followed, and ere long all three stood upon the edge of the clearing that surrounded the rock.

A charming picture stood revealed in the clear moonlight near the center of that opening.

It consisted of the forms of the lovers, Alfred Badger and the maiden Silver Tongue. His arm was thrown lightly around her waist, while one of hers rested upon his shoulder in a manner replete with grace.

They were conversing in very earnest tones, and it was evident a revelation was being made, for the words of her companion appeared to have a most powerful effect upon her. She drew back, her bosom heaving with suppressed emotion, while her large dark eyes regarded Alfred with a startled look; then, dropping her head, she remained long buried in thought.

Was memory at work, gathering up the broken links of other years? Perhaps; and so no word was spoken to break the charm.

Stepping lightly on one side, the young hunter made a slight motion to the bear-tamer, and instantly the latter emerged, leading the Wild Huntress of the Hills.

The sound caused Silver Tongue to glance hastily up, and, as she saw herself surrounded by so many strange faces, she turned, quick as thought, and, but for the rapid movement of the young hunter, she would have been away to the village.

"Stay, Silver Tongue!" he exclaimed. "They are friends!"

The startled girl paused, turned back, and trustingly placed her hands in Alfred's. But, if the sudden meeting had alarmed the girl, its effect was more powerful upon the woman.

When within a few paces of where Silver Tongue was standing, she abruptly halted, snatched her hand from the bear-tamer's grasp, and pushing back from her forehead the masses of hair that the night-wind had disheveled, she gazed with straining, staring eyes upon the maiden.

"Oh, this horrid mist that is ever shrouding my eyes!" murmured the huntress, passing her hand again and again across her brow. "Is it a dream such as so often comes to me in the darkness of the night? She was lost long, long ago, and yet I see her again before me! Agnes! little Agnes!" she whispered, drawing a little nearer, and holding out both arms with a yearning gesture to the girl. "How tall she has grown since that awful night! Then she was a little child, and now—Agnes, I—Don't you know me? Your mother, child. See," she continued, in the strained whisper, while she rapidly felt in the bosom of her dress from which she drew forth a pretty ivory toy, beautifully gilded and carved. "See!" holding it forth with trembling hand; "that is yours. I have kept it all these years, and now—"

With a quick, eager, almost childish delight, the young girl sprang forward and grasped the toy. "It is mine!" she exclaimed, breaking in upon the mother's pleadings, and rapidly turning it over and over in her hands.

Then the pent-up emotion of the mother's heart burst uncontrollably forth. The act of the young girl claiming, recognizing, as her own a toy that had belonged to her child, dissipated all doubts, and, as the flood of tears poured down the mother's pale

cheeks, they seemed to wash away the mists that had so long clouded her mind.

"Oh, my child! my Agnes! Do you not recognize me? Look! look in my face, and see if it has not sometimes come to you in your dreams!"

Dropping the precious relic, and suddenly twisting herself free from her lover's arms, Silver Tongue bounded one step forward, paused an instant to look once more into that face once so loved, and then, with a shrill cry of delight, she threw herself into the outstretched arms.

At this moment Leaping Elk came bounding into their midst, with every feature expressive of alarm.

"Why talk so loud?" he said, hastily. "Fly! Blackfeet awake and hear Silver Tongue!" he said, rapidly.

His words were only too true, for at that moment a long, keen yell cut the air, instantly repeated and taken up by others, until the very night was hideous with its infernal din.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TEST.

"THIS way, quick!" cried Old Grizzly, catching the huntress's hand, and darting off through the bushes.

Alfred Badger, supporting Silver Tongue, closely followed, while the rear was brought up by Hammond and Leaping Elk, who appeared determined to stand by his new friends.

Knowing every inch of the ground, Old Grizzly led the way, not only with absolute certainty, but by the nearest cuts and turns, so as to gain as much time as possible.

As long as they could keep within the ravine, there was no chance of discovery, but the reader will remember that it only ran a comparatively short distance of the way that must be traversed.

From the ravine they must emerge upon the open prairie, and there, they knew, discovery was almost certain.

"Hyer, take the woman," said the bear-tamer to the Avenger. "You an' the boyee wi' the gal push on ahead. Make fur the timmer below my ranch, mind, below it, an' then feel y'ur way up under kiver. As to y'ur," he said, turning to Leaping Elk, "you jess scoot outen this. Yur can't do no good, an' ef y'ur people find out that you've been helpin' us thar 'll be catamounts to pay."

Always thoughtful of others, even in such an emergency, the bear-tamer sought to save the lad from danger, and we may say that he succeeded, for Leaping Elk got back to the village undetected.

When this disposition had been made, Old Grizzly bade the others push ahead, while he tried to divert attention to himself. Alfred and Hammond, with their charges, pushed ahead up the ravine, while Old Grizzly, turning square off, breasted the hillside, and soon emerged upon the open prairie under the full light of the moon. As he had expected, he was instantly sighted by the pursuing Blackfeet, who, not knowing that there were others, turned off and began a keen pursuit of the daring man.

This was what Old Grizzly desired, and with a chuckle, and muttering: "You'll hev a good time a-gittin' me," sprung away toward the mountain where lay the home of the Wild Huntress, with a speed that soon left the swiftest warrior far in the rear.

Taking advantage of this diversion, the remaining fugitives left the ravine, stole swiftly across the open ground, gained the foothill, and finally reached the timber, as directed, some distance below the bear-tamer's camp.

Here they were safe, and in the course of half an hour, were within the inclosure, awaiting Old Grizzly's return.

It was toward midnight before the deep bark of the watch-dog told of some one advancing, and a moment later the bear-tamer himself stood within the secure walls of his castle.

At length wearied nature gave way, and all sought a sleeping-place, the women within and the men without the cavern.

Morning dawned bright and clear, and soon the little camp was alive with busy preparations.

The old bear-tamer was preparing to defend his castle, for he well knew that the Blackfeet would not give up their chief's daughter without a deadly struggle.

And he was right. While they were snatching a hasty repast, the warning bark of the watchful sentinel told them that the struggle was near at hand.

"Up with ye, an' grup y'ur weepins, fur I tell yur thar's goin' to be Ole Scratch to pay!" cried Old Grizzly, grasping his rifle and running down to the entrance.

When he reached the further end and peeped out from behind the rock that lay in front, a startling scene met his eye.

"Faggots and flints! the hull tribe, men, weemin an' children, ar' out!" he exclaimed over his shoulder, to Alfred and the Avenger, who had just then come up. "Jest take a peek an' see what yur thinks uv it."

Alfred looked out and almost instantly exclaimed:

"Here comes an Indian with a flag of truce."

"Ar' thet so?" quickly asked Old Grizzly. "Wal, I didn't look fur thet, nohow! It ar' better'n I hoped fur. Yur see, they didn't like to tackle me an' the b'ar, an' I don't much blame 'em."

"They think you are a big Medicine," said Hammond, quietly. "That is the true reason of their not attacking."

"Wal, I guess y'ur'e 'bout right. Ennyhow, here's the red-skin, an' we'll soon know what ar' up."

As he ceased speaking, Iron Heel—for it was that gallant warrior—stepped briskly forward, carrying in his hand a piece of bleached buckskin, and halted some few feet in front.

"What do 'ee want, red-skin?" asked Old Grizzly, walking out and advancing to where the Indian stood.

"The Man of the Bears came like a thief, and when it was night stole the daughter of the chief. I have come for her," was the stern reply.

"That's a dod-durned lie, red-skin," exclaimed the old trapper, angrily; "an' ef you hedn't thet white thing in y'ur hand I'd drive it down y'ur throat!"

"Where is Silver Tongue, the daughter of Big Hand?" asked Iron Heel, calmly.

"In thar," shouted the bear-tamer, "an' thar she'll stay till she wants to leave uv her own want-in'. I'll tell you what, red-skin: you go an' fetch Big Hand. He may see the gal, an' ef she wants to go back wi' him, why he may have her; but ef she don't, why then she'll be let alone to go whar she wants to. Do you agree to thet?"

"Big Hand will answer the Man of the Bears," replied the warrior, striding rapidly away.

In the course of half an hour he again appeared, this time accompanied by the head chief of the tribe.

To him the bear-tamer made the same proposition, to which the chief readily agreed, thinking that his child would be only too glad to fly to his arms.

"You agree to the bargain. No back-down," inquired Old Grizzly.

"Big Hand has spoken. His tongue is not forked and it can not lie," was the haughty response.

"Fetch out the gal an' the woman," said the bear-tamer, taking his rifle. He had no idea of allowing any treachery.

In a few moments Silver Tongue and her mother appeared.

When the former beheld her adopted father, of whom she was very fond, she ran forward and clasped her arms round his brawny neck.

"Ugh!" said the Indian, his face gleaming with pleasure.

"Hold on, old ha'r-lifter, an' see it out. Ax her to go home," cried Old Grizzly.

"The lodge of the chief is dark without his child. She will come and bring back the sunshine?" he said.

The change in the manner of the young girl, from joy, to apparently the deepest sorrow, was instantaneous. Without a word she unwound her arms, kissed the chief's forehead, and turning, walked back to her mother's side.

The whole action was so replete with meaning that no further demand was made.

Old Grizzly stepped forward and explained the state of affairs to the sorrowing chief. He knew it to be true, and without any effort at persuading, or even speaking to Silver Tongue again, he pulled his blanket about his head, and, followed by all the Indians, took his way back to the village.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NEW LIFE—CONCLUSION.

A BEAUTIFUL, sunshiny day in early summer was closing over the spurs of the Rocky Mountains when a party of four encamped upon a small stream where a dense grove of timber afforded them shelter, while a rich carpet of grass gave ample food to the horses that they had been riding.

The party were Richard Hammond, known to our readers, as the Red Avenger; Rosa Hammond, the Wild Huntress; her recovered daughter, Agnes; and Alfred Badger, the accepted lover of the young girl.

Some days previous they had parted from Old Grizzly and Leaping Elk, and were now journeying toward California, where they had proposed making their home.

It was a hard struggle for Alfred to part from his old friend and companion in many a dangerous adventure, but love proved stronger than friendship and so he followed the maiden and left the friend.

But he had left the bear-tamer under favorable auspices.

The day following the visit of the Blackfeet, a grand council had been held, to which the whites were invited.

Here a treaty of peace between Old Grizzly and the Indians had been entered into, by which the former was assured of their friendship, so long as he remained friendly to them.

Silver Tongue was present, and the parting between her and her father was most affecting, though the old warrior tried hard to conceal his emotion. The young girl had been greatly loved by all the tribe, and when she mounted the white horse to ride back to the bear-camp, she found three others standing by—a gift from the tribe.

Not only this, but many valuable furs, ornaments, etc., had been contributed, so that she would not have to go to the altar a dowryless bride.

By consent of his father, Leaping Elk was to take up his abode with the "Great Medicine of the Bears," so Old Grizzly was not left entirely alone.

The journey to California was not made without many hardships and much danger, but the little party at length arrived at San Francisco in safety. Here Alfred and Agnes Hammond were married, and the following summer the same ceremony was performed for Richard Hammond and Rosa—the Wild Huntress of the Hills.

THE END.

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